

NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

Monterey, California



THESIS

**360-DEGREE FEEDBACK IMPLEMENTATION PLAN:
DEAN POSITION, GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
AND PUBLIC POLICY, NAVAL POSTGRADUATE
SCHOOL**

by

Devin J. Morrison

March 2002

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| REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE | | | Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188 | |
| Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503. | | | | |
| 1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank) | | 2. REPORT DATE March 2002 | 3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's Thesis | |
| 4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE: Title (Mix case letters) 360-Degree Feedback Implementation Plan: Dean Position, Graduate School of Business and Public Policy, Naval Postgraduate School | | | 5. FUNDING NUMBERS | |
| 6. AUTHOR(S) Devin J. Morrison | | | | |
| 7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000 | | | 8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER | |
| 9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A | | | 10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER | |
| 11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government. | | | | |
| 12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited. | | | 12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE | |
| 13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words) 360-degree feedback is a personal development and appraisal tool designed to quantify the competencies and skills of fellow employees by tapping the collective experience of their superiors, subordinates, and peers. Substantially better than the hierarchical, single-source assessments employees are familiar with, this multi-source system provides participants with a comprehensive interpretation of their performance from numerous perspectives within the organization. The objective of this thesis is to develop a 360-degree feedback system tailored specifically for the Dean position, Graduate School of Business and Public Policy, Naval Postgraduate School. This thesis presents a literature review, a case description involving the Dean position, and discusses a series of interviews conducted with key groups of organizational stakeholders. With the results of this research confirming the need for and potential content of a feedback system, this thesis culminates by presenting 360-degree feedback procedures and documents created specifically for the Dean position. | | | | |
| 14. SUBJECT TERMS 360-Degree Feedback, Multi-Rater Feedback, Multi-Source Feedback, Leadership | | | 15. NUMBER OF PAGES 93 | |
| | | | 16. PRICE CODE | |
| 17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified | 18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified | 19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified | 20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UL | |

NSN 7540-01-280-5500
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39-18

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2-89)

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**360-DEGREE FEEDBACK IMPLEMENTATION PLAN: DEAN POSITION,
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND PUBLIC POLICY, NAVAL
POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
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MASTER OF SCIENCE IN MANAGEMENT

from the

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ABSTRACT

360-degree feedback is a personal development and appraisal tool designed to quantify the competencies and skills of fellow employees by tapping the collective experience of their superiors, subordinates, and peers. Substantially better than the hierarchical, single-source assessments employees are familiar with, this multi-source system provides participants with a comprehensive interpretation of their performance from numerous perspectives within the organization. The objective of this thesis is to develop a 360-degree feedback system tailored specifically for the Dean position, Graduate School of Business and Public Policy, Naval Postgraduate School. This thesis presents a literature review, a case description involving the Dean position, and discusses a series of interviews conducted with key groups of organizational stakeholders. With the results of this research confirming the need for and potential content of a feedback system, this thesis culminates by presenting 360-degree feedback procedures and documents created specifically for the Dean position.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine the topic of 360-degree feedback and subsequently develop a feedback instrument and process implementation plan to be utilized for the Dean position in the Graduate School of Business and Public Policy (GSBPP), Naval Postgraduate School (NPS), Monterey.

B. BACKGROUND

In recent years, business organizations have dramatically increased their use of 360-degree feedback systems, also referred to as multi-rater or multi-source feedback (Smith, 2000). Recent surveys indicate that 90 percent of Fortune 1000 companies are using some form of this methodology (Edwards and Ewen, 1996). Designed to develop or evaluate participating individuals, multi-rater systems solicit feedback from various organizational perspectives. Groups frequently selected to provide feedback include supervisors, peers, and subordinates. In contrast to the traditional top-down approach of review that focuses primarily on performance appraisal, 360-degree feedback methodology is used significantly to develop an individual's skills and competencies. However, despite mounting popularity, and the confirmed benefits of 360-degree feedback within corporate environments, institutes of higher education have only recently embarked on the use of 360-degree feedback systems in the development of their senior faculty and administrators (Armstrong, Blake, & Piotrowski, 2000).

Currently, at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, the Dean of the Graduate School of Business and Public Policy is evaluated in accordance with a traditional top-down method of review. Effectively, a formal committee comprised of senior university staff and tenured faculty within the school evaluates the Dean near the end of his or her respective term. The primary focus of this committee is to assess the Dean's performance over the previous period of service and make a decision on the renewal or termination of

the incumbent's term. Consequently, the process grants minimal constructive feedback to the Dean and only nominally contributes to the development of his or her leadership and managerial abilities. Thus, within the GSBPP, consideration is being given to the creation of a multi-rater feedback system to complement the current method of committee review. This system would focus on the Dean's development and not appraisal or evaluation.

This thesis examines the topic of 360-degree feedback. The objective is to explain the merits of 360-degree feedback and discuss specific nuances of its relevance in higher education environments. Based on a literature review and data gathered from NPS personnel, this thesis proposes a prototype 360-degree implementation plan tailored to the specific requirements of the Dean position.

C. REASEARCH OBJECTIVES

Given the purpose of this study, the primary research objectives are:

- To provide an account of current literature on the use and utility of 360-degree feedback in corporate and higher education environments.
- To identify factors related to designing a 360-degree feedback system to be used in association with the Dean position, Graduate School of Business and Pubic Policy, Naval Postgraduate School.
- To develop a multi-rater feedback system and implementation plan for the Dean position in the GSBPP.

D. SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The scope of this thesis is limited to the development of a 360-degree feedback plan designed specifically for the Dean position in the Graduate School of Business and Public Policy, Naval Postgraduate School.

The primary methodology for this research includes an extensive literature review of 360-degree feedback in both corporate and higher education environments. Information related specifically to NPS and the GSBPP was obtained through mission statements, formal job descriptions, and focus groups with GSBPP personnel. Discussions involving key GSBPP stakeholders

emphasized the development of sample feedback questions and solicited input on procedural concerns related to the implementation of a 360-degree feedback system, most notably the compilation and submission of feedback by participants.

E. EXPECTED BENEFITS

This study provides an overview of the 360-degree process and can serve as a procedural manual for implementing a feedback system in association with the Dean position in the GSBPP. Consequently, future execution of a multi-rater feedback system in accord with this research should prove beneficial to both the incumbent and the organization while simultaneously minimizing common 360-degree implementation pitfalls.

F. THESIS ORGANIZATION

This thesis is divided into five chapters: Chapter II provides a comprehensive overview of 360-degree feedback and specific attributes of an effective 360-degree system. In addition, Chapter II also discusses the integration of 360-degree feedback in institutes of higher education. Chapter III presents a comprehensive case description of the GSBPP including the content of interviews conducted with key organization stakeholder groups. Integrating the general background information of Chapter II and the case specific information of Chapter III, Chapter IV then presents a detailed feedback implementation plan designed explicitly for the GSBPP Dean. Chapter V provides action recommendations for the GSBPP Dean, and presents recommendations for future research on this topic.

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II. 360-DEGREE FEEDBACK

A. INTRODUCTION

360-degree feedback, also known as multi-rater or multi-source feedback, solicits the contribution of superiors, subordinates, peers, and self-assessment to thoroughly evaluate the various aspects of an individual's performance. This method of assessment is in direct contrast to the traditional top-down approach of evaluation whereby only one's superior provides input. Having gained wide popularity in recent years, surveys indicate that the utilization of 360-degree methodology is nearly universal among Fortune 500 companies (Ghorpade, 2000). This chapter presents an in-depth literature review and discussion of 360-degree feedback. It also introduces many of the key attributes required to successfully implement a 360-degree feedback system such as the involvement of key stakeholders, proper training of participants, establishing clarity of purpose, and designing well constructed procedures for soliciting feedback and generating feedback reports. Additionally, this chapter presents a brief overview of the history and integration of 360-degree feedback within institutes of higher education.

B. HISTORY OF 360-DEGREE FEEDBACK

Descriptions of working conditions at the turn of the century indicate that feedback historically focused on levels of productivity and was almost exclusively provided at the whim of the boss (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997). Working directly adjacent to their subordinates, superiors were able to provide ongoing feedback often when things were not going well. However, organizational and human resource trends of the 1950s and 1960s gradually broadened both the content of feedback that people received and the way in which it was given (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997).

The first of these trends involved the organizational shift away from traditional hierarchical structures to flatter corporate designs. As organizations attempted to operate in increasingly competitive environments and meet the

expectations of more demanding customers and employees, many organizations eliminated corporate layers in order to be more responsive to their stakeholders. As a result of this transition, managers at all levels of the organization experienced heightened levels of interdependence and had more people reporting to them than ever before. In the face of these circumstances, managers were unprepared to provide feedback to subordinates who they had little or no experience observing. In many cases, managers were forced to evaluate employees with whom they had no direct contact. Thus, traditional forms of downward feedback yielded less than useful information to those persons being evaluated (Lepsinger and Lucia, 1997). Consequently, 360-degree feedback provided a solution to this newfound dilemma by affording managers and employees with different sources of information. For the first time, other individuals within the organization, such as subordinates and peers, were afforded the opportunity to provide feedback to co-workers on behaviors that were not readily apparent to the manager or direct supervisor. Thus, employees were provided with a complete portrait of their behavior.

A second trend leading to the advent of 360-degree feedback was the result of new research on employee behavior. Studies determined that employee motivation and job satisfaction increased when people received timely, fair, and accurate information related to their performance (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997). Thus, organizations gradually transitioned away from the annual superior-subordinate evaluation system to a more comprehensive approach of providing feedback characterized by modern 360-degree methodology.

As a result of these and other trends, 360-degree feedback has become a popular technique in today's organizations (Tornow & London, 1998). Patterned after the industrial tradition of soliciting employees on their satisfaction with the working environment, modern feedback systems seek input from all levels of the organization on a full range of topics (London & Smither, 1995). Implemented in a variety of ways, feedback systems may be designed to target only a few members of upper management or be an organization wide-process in which all employees participate and receive feedback. With fewer organizations offering

structured career paths and training for their employees, individuals at all levels of the organization now utilize 360-degree feedback as a tool for personal development.

The evolution and growth of 360-degree feedback is strongly attributable to the efforts of the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) and TEAMS, Inc. (Edwards & Ewen, 1996). Their studies have dramatically advanced the practice and methodology of 360-degree feedback. One significant CCL study opened the door to organizational acceptance of multi-source feedback by concluding that: (1) feedback is an important element to a person's personal and professional growth, (2) most effective executives are learners and make everything into a learning experience, and (3) despite their desire to learn and improve, most managers operate in feedback-poor environments (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997). With these findings, and the trend toward flatter leaner organizations making it ever more urgent for employees to communicate and perform effectively, organizations gradually turned their attentions to 360-degree feedback as a vehicle to increase organizational effectiveness (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997).

C. ADOPTING 360-DEGREE FEEDBACK

Benefits from adopting a 360-degree feedback system extend to both individual participants and the sponsoring organization. Unlike traditional superior-subordinate feedback, multi-source participants receive honest feedback from subordinates and peers essential for developing an accurate self-perception. Prompting a behavioral change, anonymous feedback solicited from others enables individuals to form a realistic picture of their strengths or weaknesses (Waldman, Atwater, & Antonioni, 1998). Other potential benefits of adopting a 360-degree feedback system are targeted towards the organization. By increasing management's self-awareness through formalized multi-rater systems, organizational culture will become more participatory allowing the organization to react more quickly to internal and external demands (Waldman, Atwater, & Antonioni, 1998). These activities should ultimately lead to increased communication and trust within the organization resulting in fewer grievances

and greater employee satisfaction (Waldman, Atwater, & Antonioni, 1998). Still, for 360-degree feedback to fulfill its potential and be an effective stimulus for change, people within the organization need to understand its broad purpose and intent. To this end, there are key issues to consider when adopting a multi-rater feedback system.

1. Involvement of Senior Management and Stakeholders

As with most organizational change, the support and participation of senior management and key stakeholders is crucial to the success of the feedback process. Management support sends a clear message to the organization about the importance of the effort and delineates the role feedback will play in individual and organizational development. The commitment of time and organizational resources by senior management lends the process credibility and helps to ensure that the organization will remain committed until feedback objectives have been achieved. Obtaining senior management's true commitment, rather than a general blessing, guarantees that sufficient human and monetary resources will be made available in support of the feedback effort (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997). Experience dictates that the foundation for a successful 360-degree system rests on a commitment from management (Roebuck, 1996).

While management may be the force pushing for implementation, key stakeholders need to be made equally aware of important decisions related to the feedback process and the rationale behind them. Every stakeholder, whether an individual or constituency group, will view the feedback program from both a personal and organizational perspective (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1998). Consequently, if stakeholders are not afforded the opportunity to provide input to decisions or assist with implementation, they may either withhold support or actively sabotage the feedback process. Thus, all stakeholders should be made aware of: (1) the strategic competencies to be measured, (2) the methods for gathering and summarizing the feedback, (3) how the feedback will be integrated into existing development or evaluation systems, and (4) the individual and organizational benefits to be derived (Wimer & Nowack, 1998).

2. Communication and Training

Management and stakeholder involvement is most readily established through a system of clear communication. Given that feedback can be threatening to some within the organization, it is essential that the goals and procedures of multi-rater feedback be communicated openly and early in the implementation process (Wimer & Nowack, 1998). Without clear communication regarding the feedback implementation process, a theoretically smooth procedure can degenerate into misinterpretation, uncertainty, and distrust (Wimer & Nowack, 1998). All stakeholders and interested parties should have their concerns addressed prior to implementation and should, at minimum, understand the rationale underlying major implementation decisions.

When implementing a multi-source feedback system, the primary method of communicating with participants is training. Whether formal or informal, group or one-on-one, 360-degree feedback training exposes participants to the particulars of operating in a multi-source system, eases uncertainty, and serves to minimize system breakdowns. Two topics that routinely hamper the implementation process and thus require vigilant communication and training efforts are the issues of clarity of purpose and anonymity / confidentiality

a. Clarity of Purpose

One communicative factor that contributes significantly to the successful 360-degree system entails the firm establishment of the system's purpose. Some organizations use 360-degree feedback purely as a development tool while others use the feedback process as a vehicle for performance appraisal and evaluation. Regardless of an organization's intent, program objectives must be clarified at the onset of implementation (Tornow & London, 1998). At its core the clarity of purpose question becomes, "Is the feedback to be used primarily for individual development or is the feedback to be used for administrative decision-making purposes such as performance appraisal and salary action?" When the purpose is not clearly communicated to process participants, resulting uncertainty will often create a vacuum that may be filled by

anxiety, rumors, and suspicion. Communication that effectively clarifies the purpose behind soliciting feedback is the most powerful tool for eliminating this type of resistance (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1998).

Developmental feedback assists employees by providing them with information related to their behavior and work attitudes that might otherwise go unnoticed in the traditional top-down method of review. Developmental feedback is designed to help people improve their skills or performance and there are no repercussions for negative feedback. During an era characterized by escalating job complexity and the need to cultivate human capital, this method of feedback provides organizations with a personnel development mechanism that expands the historical reliance on supervisor-subordinate feedback systems.

Feedback for the purpose of employee development became popular in the late 1980s and today is the most common use of 360-degree feedback (Bracken, 1994). When used for this purpose, feedback results are generally tabulated by an independent third party and given only to the ratee. In addition, the third-party tabulator will frequently assume a coaching role, assisting the ratee in developing an action plan correlated to his or her specific feedback results. A development-only approach gives participants experience using multi-source feedback and helps ease their resistance to change. Also, there is less personal risk associated with this method since there are no organizational repercussions linked to the feedback results and individuals have more control over the data and how they are used (Wimer & Nowack, 1998).

The 360-degree feedback process, when used for appraisal and evaluative purposes, is the same as developmental feedback except (1) the results are shared with the ratee's supervisor who uses this information to make judgments about performance and (2) the ratee will be rewarded or punished based on the results (Edwards & Ewen, 1996). Since supervisors review and use the results of appraisal and evaluative feedback, these systems are relatively more complex than their developmental counterpart. Additionally, under an appraisal and evaluative system, participant concerns involving anonymity and integrity are heightened and system implementation is frequently difficult and met

with mixed results (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1998). Consequently, experts recommend that, to start with, 360-degree feedback should be used for developmental purposes only, especially if it is the organization's first experience (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1998).

b. Anonymity and Confidentiality

Anonymity and confidentiality are two significant terms often confused when referencing the 360-degree process. Anonymity refers to the extent to which a rater's identity will be revealed in conjunction with the completion of a feedback questionnaire or interview. Confidentiality refers to the limitations placed on who within an organization will have access to a ratee's feedback results. Ensuring that adequate safeguards are applied to both anonymity and confidentiality is pivotal to the success of any 360-degree system; and communication regarding the protocols and limitations of these safeguards should be conveyed early in the implementation process.

To effectively assure anonymity and confidentiality, an organization must provide a sound feedback environment (Tornow & London, 1998). This involves not only establishing adequate anonymity and confidentiality safeguards, but also fostering an attitude within the organization that is supportive of individuals and respectful of their need for privacy. To this end, there are several suggestions in the literature for assuring anonymity. First, feedback questionnaires should be distributed in adequate numbers such that individual raters cannot be identified via their completed surveys (Chappelow, 1998). Specifically, each rating group should consist of no fewer than three participants (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997). Second, when tabulating results, individual rater input should be aggregated into a group score. This prevents the ratee from tracing a single response back to the responsible rater. Third, care should be taken to ensure the anonymity of small rater groups and questionnaires with extreme marks or easily decipherable comments.

While not emphasized to the same degree as anonymity, organizations must be equally rigorous in enforcing issues of confidentiality. Care should be taken to maintain ratee trust in system confidentiality through

established procedures for disseminating and handling feedback. Furthermore, a set system of organizational rules should govern the access and use of feedback results. When established, these rules should not be altered or violated during the course of a feedback cycle. Most participants, once comfortable with the anonymity and confidentiality procedures outlined under the feedback system, will provide open and honest input essential to the 360-degree process.

3. Utilizing a Pilot Test

Utilizing a multi-rater feedback system in a traditional top-down culture may seem radical to many participants. Accordingly, there is a danger of alienating those involved if initial system implementation plans are overly ambitious. To alleviate this concern, Wimer and Nowack (1998) propose the idea of introducing the feedback process on a pilot basis. The use of a pilot test enables process organizers to assess the system on multiple levels while simultaneously involving only a limited number of participants within the organization. Utilizing a pilot test affords process organizers the opportunity to: assess the value of feedback questions, gauge the clarity and effectiveness of training materials, and assure the involvement of key stakeholders.

D. RATER GROUPS

Traditionally, supervisors have been charged with evaluating the performance of their personnel and providing feedback. However, in a 360-degree system, other raters, such as peers and subordinates, bring different and varying perspectives to the evaluation process. Additionally, self-evaluation is an integral part of the multi-source system. London and Smither (1995) state that, “in the socially constructed world in which employees work, others’ judgment about them (no matter how biased they may be) constitute an important reality” (p. 809). It is therefore probable that a feedback recipient would gain additional value in receiving multi-perspective feedback as opposed to the singular input provided by a supervisor.

Identifying the most appropriate people to rate the feedback recipient is a key part of the feedback process. Ideally, each selected rater will have sufficient

experience observing the specific behaviors the ratee would like to evaluate. Accordingly, feedback recipients should have full involvement in identifying who they think is in the best position to comment on their performance. The feedback recipient is often most uniquely qualified to make this decision and should do so in accordance with the following key determinants (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997):

- What is the nature and length of the relationship between the rater and the ratee?
- Does the rater understand the full nature of what the ratee does?
- As can be best achieved, a balanced selection of raters from the peer, subordinate, and supervisor groups should be selected.
- A balanced selection of raters--some that work well with the ratee and some that do not.

1. Downward Feedback

Supervisory, or downward feedback is the most common type of performance input in both traditional and multi-source systems. As stated by Murphy and Cleveland (1995), "Supervisory evaluations follow the natural flow of power and authority [within organizations]" (p.135). Evaluating a subordinate's performance is generally part of the supervisor's job. However, supervisors view only a portion of a subordinate's performance and are therefore afforded an incomplete picture on which to base their evaluations (London, 1995).

In contrast to other rater groups, the limited number of raters in the supervisory group generally does not afford anonymity to supervisors providing feedback. In other words, feedback recipients are commonly aware of a supervisor's input because these scores are not aggregated with other raters. As a result, supervisors must be prepared to justify their input and defend their ratings to subordinates (Tornow & London, 1998). This lack of anonymity may make supervisory ratings less reliable or more one-sided than ratings from other groups (Tornow & London, 1998).

2. Upward Feedback

Upward feedback is an important part of the 360-degree process and is most commonly characterized by a subordinate providing feedback to a superior. Typically, at least four to six subordinates are selected by the ratee to provide feedback (London & Smither, 1995). Utilizing fewer than four participants in the subordinate group is strongly discouraged and could jeopardize the condition of anonymity and the reliability of the feedback. Furthermore, subordinate evaluators who question their anonymity may positively bias their ratings based on a fear of retaliation (Ghorpade, 2000).

Subordinate ratings provide the ratee with a new perspective of his or her performance. While some supervisors may view this as potentially threatening for their role, studies have found that reactions to upward feedback are generally positive (Tornow & London, 1998). This acceptance can most likely be attributed to the maturity of the ratee and the respect they have for those subordinates selected to provide feedback. Subordinate input represents one of the ways in which 360-degree feedback contributes to performance development and varies from traditional methodology.

3. Peer Feedback

Peer feedback refers to input provided when the rater and ratee are at the same organizational level. Studies indicate that peer feedback is both a valid and reliable aspect of the 360-degree process (Tornow & London, 1998). However, as is the case with subordinate feedback, anonymity is an important aspect at the peer level. In addition, bias amongst peer subgroups can play a considerable role. For example, research indicates that peers tend to rate similar peers higher as opposed to dissimilar peers (Fox, Ben-Nahum, & Yinon, 1989). Another finding is that high performers tend to evaluate their peers with more scrutiny than their low performing counterparts (Saavedra & Kwun, 1993). To prevent competition amongst peer evaluators, it must be emphasized that the feedback is to be used for developmental purposes only. If this point is not successfully conveyed, peers may be reluctant to evaluate each other in fear of disturbing the

group climate. If a peer group feels the information will be used for evaluation purposes, the perceived competition among members of a peer group may result in a rating bias (Tornow & London, 1998).

4. Self-Feedback

Although input contributed by others may be more accurate, self-feedback remains an important attribute of the 360-degree feedback process (Harris & Schaubroeck, 1988). The significance of self-assessment is two-fold. First, self-assessment provides the ratee a reference point from which they may compare the feedback of others. For example, does the ratee have a higher or lower impression of himself or herself than do others? Second, by sitting down and performing an honest personal evaluation, self-assessment is often the foremost step the ratee takes towards individual development. Self-rating requires introspection and the evaluation of where one stands in relation to some performance or effectiveness standard. As a ratee completes the feedback instrument, the individual begins to think about his or her performance and constructively embarks on the developmental process (Tornow & London, 1998).

E. DATA COLLECTION

Data collection is the process of soliciting input from the various rater groups. Conducted through a feedback instrument, the data collection process solicits input on specific work behaviors and should ideally relate to existing measurement systems within the organization. Regardless of rater group, selecting a data collection method is a critical step in the feedback process. The most common methods of collecting data are questionnaires and one-on-one interviews (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997).

1. Questionnaires

Questionnaires commonly take the form of a series of multiple-choice questions and are usually administered utilizing a paper document. However, with increased frequency, companies are using email or other electronic means to disseminate questionnaires. While there is some variation among commercially available questionnaires, most products and questions commonly

center on measuring observable leadership traits and behavioral aspects that can be linked to the ratee. Some questionnaires also contain open-ended questions thus affording the rater the opportunity to include written comments. Questionnaire selection will ultimately depend on the attributes the organization desires to measure in conjunction with the overall purpose of the feedback process. However, with private sector firms marketing over one hundred pre-made questionnaires, the questionnaire selection process can be difficult. Alternatively, the selection decision can be forgone and an in-house questionnaire can be developed in lieu of a commercially available product (Edwards & Ewen, 1996). The advantage of an in-house development is that it allows for tailoring. Questions can be included that address specific issues on which the ratee or the organization is seeking feedback.

The process of administering questionnaires to the various raters should, at a minimum, incorporate several basic steps (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997):

- Participants should be informed about why the data are being collected and how the data will be used.
- With appropriate training and instruction, a ratee should complete his or her self-evaluation while simultaneously distributing similar questionnaires to selected raters (superiors, subordinates, peers).
- In accordance with predefined standards of anonymity and confidentiality, completed questionnaires should be returned to a central location (internal or external) for processing, from which the feedback report should be prepared.
- A ratee will review his or her feedback report, often under the guidance of a trained coach, and based on this input determine the appropriate next steps in his or her development process.

2. One-on-One Interview

Individual interviews may serve as a stand-alone method of data collection, but are more commonly used to complement data collected by questionnaires. Conducted by a contracted third party or by assigned personnel

within the organization, many practitioners believe that multiple data collection methods provide the best picture of an individual's behavior. Whereas questionnaires solicit input on strengths and weaknesses, interviews tend to provide context to questionnaire data and clarify questionnaire input. However, despite these benefits, most organizations do not have the resources to conduct this type of activity as interviews require additional money and time when compared to questionnaires. Furthermore, the in-depth nature of comments provided through interviews often results in concerns about anonymity and confidentiality that most organizations are not capable of facilitating (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997).

F. THE FEEDBACK REPORT

Once both raters and ratees have finished their feedback questionnaires, completed materials should be submitted to a predetermined third party in accordance with established system standards of anonymity and confidentiality. This third party may be from within the organization or hired from an outside company specializing in 360-degree feedback. The decision to hire an outside agency is most commonly monetary in nature and a function of the scope or size of implementation. Whereas small organizations or implementations may be handled internally, large corporations may wish to contract out the process. Regardless of the method selected, it is the responsibility of the third party to sift through the questionnaires, prioritizing and interpreting the large amount of information into a report that can be logically interpreted by the ratee. The report should be simple to read and statistically sound, utilizing the best available methods for presenting the information (Edwards & Ewen, 1996).

The most common feedback reports contain both graphical displays and a corresponding narrative portion (Tornow & London, 1998). Graphical displays include charts, graphs, or tables that highlight and compare the numerical scores of the various rater groups. Most instruments utilize a combination of these displays so the reader can visualize the specific data presented. Narrative reports are used to provide personalized interpretations of the ratee's scores and

most commonly explain or clarify graphical elements of the report. It is important to consider that there is no right or wrong method of preparing the feedback report, only that it presents the information clearly and maintains rater anonymity. To this end, individual rater scores are aggregated according to rater group. For example, individual peer responses to a specific question would appear to the ratee as a singular score for that question. Only the independent third-party tabulator would be aware of specific respondent input.

Within the feedback report, precaution towards maintaining the anonymity concerns of respondents should also be made for written comments. Comments easily linked back to a particular rater should be transposed so as to minimize the ratee's ability to correlate the comment to a specific individual (Tornow & London, 1998). A sample feedback report is provided in Appendix F of this thesis.

G. FEEDBACK RECIPIENT AND ACTION PLAN

Undeniably, 360-degree feedback is a powerful tool when used to develop a ratee's performance and improve effectiveness. However, like the truth-telling mirror in Snow White, the feedback report often contains information that the ratee may not expect or necessarily want to hear. Consequently, the forum and subsequent actions under which the feedback report is presented to the ratee play a pivotal role in expanding the usefulness of the 360-degree process (Tornow & London, 1998).

1. Recipient Response

Ideally, feedback should be provided to the recipient as soon as possible after questionnaires have been returned and tabulated. Short turn-around times help to maintain participant motivation and ensure that the feedback is still relevant to the ratee. When presented with feedback results, the extent to which the recipient accepts and internalizes the results is crucial for individual development. Consider a situation where every attempt has been made to collect information about an individual and present this information in a concise and clear feedback report. Yet, despite these efforts, if the recipient is not of the

appropriate mindset, little positive gain will result from the report presentation process. In order to obtain maximum results from the feedback process, the recipient must be open to change and not threatened by aspects of self-evaluation. Recipient familiarity with the feedback process, heightened maturity level, and the utilization of a coach can each aid in reducing negative psychological mechanisms often affiliated with individuals receiving sensitive information about how a colleague views their performance (Tornow & London, 1998).

2. The Coach

Most ratees, when presented with a feedback report, experience difficulty translating the results of the report into constructive behavioral changes geared toward personal improvement or development. A multi-rater system that collects truthful and accurate information about a ratee's performance can be a wasted experience if the process of translating the feedback report into action is not handled correctly. To alleviate these difficulties, a coach is frequently inserted into the process (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997). The coach, often times the third-party tabulator of the feedback questionnaires, serves as a non-threatening and constructive link between the feedback report and the ratee. Selected by either the ratee or the organization, the coach should be able to provide open and honest communication to the ratee and will frequently have some degree of training in both psychology and managerial or leadership development. Psychological training may aid the coach in addressing possible obstacles such as a ratee's unwillingness to challenge self-perceptions or fear of exposing weaknesses. Managerial or leadership training helps the coach serve as a guide in converting the results of the feedback report into constructive personal development activities for the ratee. In order to improve the constructiveness of the feedback session, other aspects the coach should consider include the timing or scheduling of the session and the location of the feedback session. Extrinsic elements such as these serve to set the mood of the meeting and, if not planned properly, can greatly distract from the session's productivity (Tornow & London,

1998). It is the coach's responsibility to work with the ratee and, based on information derived from the feedback report, develop what is commonly referred to as an action plan (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997).

3. Action Plans

Action plans, also known as development plans, are based on the feedback report and a decision by the ratee to make personal improvements. Action plans document how input from the feedback is to be addressed through a series of personal development objectives. Action plans must be continually reinforced and updated as personal and organizational situations evolve. Additionally, care should be taken such that action plan objectives are measurable and non-ambiguous. Failure to do so may result in a ratee being unable to calculate the effectiveness of his or her personal development or performance improvement activities. Whether tied to specific competencies or generic recommendations resulting from the feedback report, actions plans represent the transformational portion of the 360-degree process (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997).

H. EVALUATING EFFECTIVENESS AND FOLLOW-UP

The final, and perhaps most crucial element of a 360-degree program is process follow-up and evaluation by both the individual and the organization (Tornow & London, 1998). Relative to the program's purpose and scope of implementation, possible criteria to measure effectiveness include (Waldman, Atwater, & Antonioni, 1998):

- Rater and ratee assessment of the extent to which the process was perceived as adding value.
- Questionnaire response rates, high response rates are a good indicator that participants trust the process.
- Positive changes in grievance, satisfaction, absenteeism, and turnover rates by employees are indicative of process effectiveness.
- Work behaviors and performance.

Too often, 360-degree feedback systems are implemented with expectations that they will automatically translate into results. However, without measuring effectiveness against the aforementioned or other suitable criteria, positive 360-degree outcomes should not be presumed. Only through follow-up and evaluation will an individual or organization learn to what extent a behavioral change was successful and whether it had an impact on performance (Wimer & Nowack, 1998).

Although the number of months recommended varies by author, a sensible part of the follow-up process should also include the premeditated intent to repeat the feedback process 8 to 12 months after the initial feedback cycle (Wimer & Nowack, 1998). First, process repetition affords ratees a point of comparison from which they can measure their personal development. Just as self-assessment provides the ratee a baseline to compare the feedback of others, subsequent feedback cycles provide ratees a method of assessing their attempts to change behavior (Wimer & Nowack, 1998). Second, repetition eases organizational resistance in that participants view the feedback system as a process aimed at improving critical competencies and behaviors not as a singular event.

I. 360-DEGREE FEEDBACK AND HIGHER EDUCATION

For approximately two-decades, 360-degree feedback has been highly touted in the business community (Tornow & London, 1998). Providing its users with a valid and effective personnel development tool, research confirms that multi-rater feedback affords participants a mechanism for self-insight and leads to the enhancement of managerial proficiency and leadership skills (Armstrong, Blake, & Piotrowski, 2000). However despite these accolades, 360-degree feedback has only recently penetrated institutes of higher education. Claiming that these systems were not adaptable, critics historically hampered the integration of multi-source feedback into educational settings (Armstrong, Blake, & Piotrowski, 2000). This resistance was based in the belief of many college and university administrators that multi-source feedback lacked the flexibility needed

to function successfully in bureaucracies like higher education (Lang, 1983). In part this resistance was justified. Early 360-degree applications in higher education environments failed to consider that educational administrators differed from their corporate counterparts. Consequently, most early feedback questionnaires were generic and did not focus on the core behavioral attributes of university administrators. Perceived as ineffective, administrators were unable to capitalize on the nonspecific feedback they receive from these questionnaires (Lang, 1983).

Research that defines and develops the roles and responsibilities of college and university administrators has enabled multi-source systems to be more in-tune with the needs of its participants. A significant contributor to this research has been Dr. Gary Ripple. In a 1980 paper, Dr. Ripple discussed the importance of developing personal talents and managerial skills in university administrators via upward, downward, and peer evaluation (Armstrong, Blake, & Piotrowski, 2000). Presented at the College Board, Midwestern regional meeting, his paper represented the first formal dialogue on developing university administrators by means of 360-degree feedback methodology.

Despite Dr. Ripple's comments, in the years following his remarks widespread acceptance of multi-rater feedback remained sparse amongst educators. One reason for the lingering reluctance may have stemmed from the poor quality of feedback questionnaires. As a cornerstone of 360-degree feedback, questionnaires must accurately measure the critical managerial skills and administrative tasks of feedback participants. Yet in the 1970s and 1980s, little information was available defining the responsibilities and job attributes of college and university administrators. Consequently, early questionnaires lacked the ability to accurately measure skills and aptitudes of administrative personnel. Thus, while educators may have accepted Dr. Ripple's remarks touting the merits of multi-source feedback, the absence of accurate well-established questionnaire materials may have dissuaded their enthusiasm (McGowan, Eichelberger, & Nelson, 1994).

However, with the passage of time and the continued diligence of researchers, several studies have reported on the benefits of using 360-degree feedback in higher education (Triolo, 1997). For example, utilizing colleague feedback at the University of Minnesota, researchers reported that multi-rater systems proved useful in developing the leadership skills of university administrators (Bland, Edwards, & Kuhi, 1994). In addition to research, expanded literature defining the critical management skills and leadership styles of college administrators has resulted in the improved application of feedback questionnaires (Tucker, 1992). Properly defined administrator duties have enhanced questionnaire effectiveness and further reduced the perceived inflexibilities and inaccuracies of applying 360-degree feedback in higher education.

Further contributing to the gradual acceptance of 360-degree feedback has been a series of trends in the educational community. Mounting pressure for accountability in education has compelled administrative personnel to operate more like corporations and competitive business enterprises (Halpern & Reich, 1999). Consequently, the resulting scrutiny placed on administrative staff has worked to reverse past resistance and promote the introduction of 360-degree feedback models in educational settings. Specific internal and external developments leading to the gradual acceptance of 360-degree feedback in higher education include:

- Increased competition amongst colleges and universities (Armstrong, Blake, & Piotrowski, 2000).
- Increased public scrutiny of administrative personnel (Armstrong, Blake, & Piotrowski, 2000).
- During the 1980s, traditional single-source methods used to evaluate teachers and administrators failed to result in measurable increases in student achievement or organizational performance. Consequently, school boards sought alternate methods of evaluating their personnel, including the use of multi-source feedback systems (Manatt, 1997).

- Traditionally, educators have been evaluated using pass / fail methodology. Under this system, administrators were devoid of a mechanism whereby they could sort participants according to performance (Brutus, Fleenor, & London, 1998). Using 360-degree feedback for appraisal and evaluation, administrators were afforded a mechanism whereby they could both rank educators according to performance and hold them accountable for their actions.
- Educational environments tend to be cooperative in nature thus promoting a leniency bias in ratings and diluting the top-down system of evaluation (Brutus, Fleenor, & London, 1998). By breaking away from the patriarchal bonds of the superior-subordinate relationship, under 360-degree systems, administrators receive multiple perspectives of an individual's performance thereby reducing the likelihood of a leniency bias.

Pressure to improve the managerial performance of university administrators coupled with advances in the accuracy and flexibility of 360-degree feedback has resulted in these feedback systems being more commonly accepted and utilized in educational environments. While there is no concise record of how many colleges and universities are currently using multi-source systems in conjunction with their administrative personnel, documentation is available on several well-implemented programs at schools including the University of West Florida and Iowa State University. Their experiences demonstrate that multi-rate systems produce administrators that are responsible, proactive, and possess the potential flexibility necessary to operate in the contemporary educational environment (Armstrong, Blake, & Piotrowski, 2000).

J. SUMMARY

During an era inundated with the need to develop human capital and open organizational lines of communication, multi-rater systems have given people the feedback and information they would not ordinarily have received under a traditional top-down method of evaluation. In addition to providing ratee specific

feedback, multi-source systems send a signal to employees about what behavior is encouraged within the organization and reflects a philosophy that the exchange of valid information is beneficial to work relationships and makes the organization function better. However, to ensure success and avoid common pitfalls, participants and the organization should be familiar with the nuances of implementing a 360-degree system. Training, communication, and the involvement of key stakeholders are crucial to a program's success.

Building upon the topics discussed in this chapter, Chapter III provides a case description of NPS, the GSBPP, its stakeholders, and presents information essential to accurately developing a feedback system for the Dean position.

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III. CASE DESCRIPTION: DEAN POSITION, GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND PUBLIC POLICY

A. INTRODUCTION

To successfully implement a 360-degree feedback system, process organizers must have a working knowledge of both 360-degree feedback and the organization in which the feedback system will be implemented (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1998). This chapter builds upon the general overview of multi-rater feedback provided in Chapter II and focuses on a case description of Naval Postgraduate School, the Graduate School of Business and Public Policy, and the GSBPP Dean position. In addition to the case description, this chapter also outlines the results of several interviews conducted with key groups of organizational stakeholders. At its conclusion, this chapter should provide the reader with an understanding of the GSBPP, its stakeholders, and lay the groundwork for designing a tailor-made 360-degree feedback system.

B. NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) is an academic institution that provides graduate education in programs relevant to the United States Navy, other arms of the Department of Defense (DoD), and allied nations. Located in Monterey, California, NPS is approximately 120 miles south of San Francisco. Home of NPS since 1947, the campus covers 627 acres and houses state-of-the-art laboratories, numerous academic buildings, a library, and recreational activities. With nearly 1,500 students in attendance, the student body encompasses members of the five United States uniformed services, various civil-service employees, and officers and civilians from approximately 30 allied nations (NPS Web Page, 2001).

Offering advanced degrees in a variety of majors, the faculty at NPS consists of approximately 200 tenure-track faculty, 30 military faculty, and a varying number of non-tenure-track faculty who support the institution's teaching and research programs. Among tenure-track faculty, 99 percent hold a doctorate

degree or the highest terminal degree in their field (NPS Web Page, 2001). Military faculty and non-tenure-track faculty are proven performers in their fields and bring specialized experience and skills into the classroom.

Administratively, a mixture of civilian and military personnel governs NPS. For example, the school's Superintendent is traditionally an Admiral in the United States Navy while a senior civilian holds the position of Provost. A complete NPS organizational chart is seen in Appendix A of this thesis (NPS Web Page, 2001).

C. GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND PUBLIC POLICY

The Graduate School of Business and Public Policy is the largest and most diverse school at NPS. With approximately 250 students enrolled in over a dozen master's degree programs, the school is responsible for graduate-level academic programs leading to the degrees of Master of Business Administration, Master of Science in Management, and several other master of science degrees (GSBPP Web Page, 2001). In support of these academic programs, the following list highlights the various faculty teaching and research interests within the GSBPP:

- Acquisition, Contract, and Program Management
- Transportation and Logistics Management
- Financial Management
- Public Budgeting
- Manpower, Personnel, and Training Analysis
- Organization and Management
- Strategic Planning and Policy
- Economics / Resource Allocation

In addition to the resident programs, the GSBPP also offers an array of non-resident coursework using on-site instruction and the latest video teleconferencing technology (VTC). Non-resident offerings include master's degree programs, executive education programs, and courses of professional education for DoD personnel.

Like most graduate level institutions, research serves as an important aspect of GSBPP activities. Research efforts range from basic scholarly pursuits such as thesis work, to applied research intended to assist DoD policy and operational decision-making.

The GSBPP is one of only two institutions in the country to have received accreditation by both The Association to Advance Schools of Business and The National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration. A GSBPP organizational chart is seen in Appendix B of this thesis (GSBPP Web Page, 2001).

1. GSBPP Faculty

The school's diverse, multi-disciplinary focus necessitates an equally diverse faculty. Drawn from a variety of backgrounds including academia, public service, business, and the military, GSBPP faculty is composed of approximately 70 full-time personnel with 40 tenure-track and 30 non-tenure-track members (GSBPP Web Page, 2001).

Outlining the personnel structure within the GSBPP, the following information was obtained from the NPS Faculty Handbook. Tenure-track faculty are commonly afforded the title of Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, or Professor. Entry into this track is based on a system of requirements defined in Section IV of the faculty handbook. Tenure-track participants comprise two distinct groups, those who have been awarded tenure and those who are seeking tenure. Appointments for untenured faculty in the tenure-track are for a specific term, whereas tenured faculty serve for an indefinite period without a prescribed limit on their term-of-service. Promotion and award of tenure is the responsibility of the Faculty Promotion Council with specific prior approval of the Academic Dean. For promotion and tenure, faculty are judged in two general categories: (1) internal services to NPS, i.e., teaching and service, and (2) external visibility, e.g., through research. Performance in each of these categories must demonstrably enhance NPS's reputation in either the academic community or DoD. Tenure-track faculty at NPS are expected to be strong contributors to high

quality, relevant instruction and be active in their profession and service to DoD (NPS Faculty Handbook, 1994).

As a complement to the tenure-track faculty, non-tenure-track faculty provide the institution a means of responding to short-term specialized programming requirements. Non-tenure-track faculty are appointed for a limited period. All appointments are contingent on the availability of funds, needs of the institution, and the work performed or qualifications of the incumbent. Titles for non-tenure-track faculty commonly include Lecturer or Senior Lecturer. The Lecturer title applies to faculty whose primary duty is providing instruction related to specialized course work or temporary positions within a discipline. In addition to civilian Lecturers, military faculty working within the GSBPP commonly receive the title of Lecturer. The maximum length of service for Lectures cannot exceed seven years. Senior Lecturer is a non-tenure-track appointment reserved for faculty with superb instructional capabilities and who possess specialized knowledge relevant to NPS. Commonly, retired military or instructors who do not entertain the need for tenure retain these positions. Subject to annual reappointment, there is no maximum length-of-service restriction for Senior Lecturers (GSBPP Faculty Handbook, 1994).

2. GSBPP Staff

Augmenting the faculty, there are approximately eighteen staff members working within the GSBPP. Holding various positions throughout the GSBPP, staff members most commonly work in the areas of supply, administrative support, and information technology. These individuals provide functional assistance to the faculty and students, thus promoting the school's overall mission.

3. GSBPP Dean

The focus of this thesis is on the role of the Dean within the GSBPP. The Dean is responsible for providing leadership in all aspects of GSBPP activities including: academic, administrative, and developmental. The Dean is commonly characterized as having strong entrepreneurial qualities in promoting the GSBPP to external stakeholders while at the same time managing GSBPP internal

operations and addressing the priorities of NPS. With the GSBPP operating as a semi-autonomous unit within NPS, the Dean must possess the ability to administer a complex business and public policy school within a DoD environment. Broad responsibilities and an intricate network of stakeholders, create a need for the Dean to receive timely feedback in the performance of his or her duties.

Currently the Dean receives both formal and informal feedback. Formal feedback is received via an official committee comprised of senior university staff and tenured department personnel that evaluate the Dean near the end of his or her respective term. The primary focus of this committee is to assess the Dean's performance over the previous period of service and make a decision on the renewal or termination of the incumbent's term. Consequently, this process grants minimal constructive feedback to the Dean and only nominally contributes to the development of his or her leadership and managerial abilities.

In addition to this infrequent, formal method of receiving feedback, the Dean also collects less recognizable, informal feedback on a daily basis. Through faculty interactions, meetings with GSBPP Associate Deans, and briefs with other NPS personnel, routine exchanges provide the Dean a foundation on which to base daily business decisions. However, in conversing with numerous GSBPP faculty and staff, personal observations indicate that few of these daily exchanges afford the Dean concrete information necessary to develop personal management and leadership skills. Consequently, the goal of this thesis is to design a feedback system by which the Dean can collect input from his or her stakeholders and utilize this feedback for personal development.

D. GSBPP STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Building on the objective of designing a 360-degree feedback system tailored specifically for the GSBPP Dean, interviews were conducted with several GSBPP stakeholder groups. The goal of these interviews was to solicit input from the various groups regarding issues of feedback anonymity, procedural concerns, and questionnaire content. In conjunction with the literature review and

case description, the results of these interviews are then be used to develop the feedback instruments and procedures discussed in Chapter IV of this thesis.

Interviews were conducted with the Dean's three primary stakeholder groups, superiors, peers, and subordinates. Additionally, due to the diverse nature of the subordinate group, interviews were further delineated according to the following sub-groups: tenure-track faculty, non-tenure-track faculty, military faculty, and staff. Attempting to gain an accurate representation of the thoughts and attitudes of the various stakeholder groups, interview participants were selected based on their availability, breadth of experience within the organization, and the scope of their working relationship with the Dean. Having considered this information, the final selection of interviewees was made in association with the advice of several current GSBPP faculty members.

Interviews were arranged by email, during which interviewees were informed of the purpose and scope of this research. A script was prepared prior to each interview highlighting questions relevant to the group. Also, probes and follow-up questions were utilized for the elaboration or clarification of specific comments. Appendix C of this thesis provides a summary of the questions and protocols used during each interview. Interviews were recorded on audiocassettes and key concepts were transcribed by the researcher for the purpose of preparing this thesis. To facilitate an open and honest environment, interview participants were advised that no statements would be directly attributed to individuals during the course of this write-up.

Interviews were conducted at various times between Monday, February 11 and Thursday, February 21, 2001. For the superior stakeholder group, two senior NPS staff members were interviewed. For the peer group, consisting primarily of Deans from other schools within NPS, three individuals were selected for interviews. However, of these only one accepted and was subsequently interviewed. It should be noted, that a restructuring and hiring process taking place within NPS currently limits the size of this stakeholder group. For the tenure-track group, eight individuals were invited to attend an interview, but only two accepted and were interviewed. As a subset of the tenured group, two of the

three Associate Deans were also interviewed. For the Lecturer / Senior Lecture group, four individuals were selected for interviews and two attended. Augmenting the Lecturer group, four military faculty members were invited to an interview, but only one was in attendance. Culminating the group interview process, four staff members were chosen for interviews and three participated. In addition to the formal group interviews, conversations were held with Dean Euske of the GSBPP on three occasions.

Throughout the interviews, several themes involving the implementation of a 360-degree feedback plan resonated amongst the stakeholder groups. Each of the following sections discusses these themes and presents a sampling of the varying points of view expressed during the interviews.

1. Work Relationships and Communication

A rater's ability to provide feedback to a ratee is directly correlated to the nature and length of their working relationship (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997). Thus, understanding the Dean's various work relationships was pivotal to determining both the need for, and design of, a quality feedback system. To this end, the first item addressed during each interview was establishing the relationship and level of communication the interviewee(s) have with the Dean. As expected, this relationship fluctuated according to stakeholder group. Superiors, senior faculty, and Associate Deans appear to have the most in-depth relationships and greatest opportunity for ongoing communication with the Dean. In fact, some senior stakeholders mentioned that their current communication with the Dean did not necessitate the creation of an additional feedback mechanism.

In contrast, other groups such as peers, less senior faculty, and staff welcomed the idea of creating a new mechanism for providing feedback to the Dean. These groups stated that while they are willing and able to communicate with the Dean, opportunities to do so were limited by the scope of their work relationship. Consequently, a 360-degree feedback system would provide an opening for more frequent feedback between the Dean and stakeholders.

In addition to variances in frequency of communication, work relationships also affect the type and content of communication stakeholders have with the

Dean. For example, high-level superiors down through senior faculty tend to communicate on overarching matters such as strategic planning and mission development. In contrast, staff and junior faculty are inclined to communicate on more standard issues such as scheduling or workload equity. In fact, interview results confirm that across all stakeholder groups, the Dean is regularly exposed to diverse levels and patterns of communication. However, only modest amounts of this routine communication appear to be on a level such that it provides the Dean systematic feedback geared towards his or her personal development.

To design an effective feedback system, obtaining insight into the complex relationships the Dean has with his or her various stakeholder groups is important. Consequently, these interviews provided an understanding of the Dean's work relationships, the frequency of interaction, and the level of communication involved. In turn, this information will be considered in designing optimal feedback procedures and instruments that cater to the Dean's full spectrum of stakeholders.

2. Anonymity

Just as frequency and content of communication varies according to stakeholder group, so too do concerns about process anonymity. During each interview, participants were presented with a hypothetical scenario involving a 360-degree feedback system. The scenario outlined the handling and submission of questionnaires, the preparation of the feedback report, and the utilization of the feedback report by the Dean. Following this exchange, interviewees were asked about their concerns on the issue of anonymity. As expected, the results varied with each stakeholder group.

Stakeholder groups that held more or equivalent power as compared to the Dean expressed little or no apprehension on the issue of anonymity and said that if asked, they would be willing to provide the Dean feedback. Groups most frequently expressing this opinion included: superiors, peers, and senior-level faculty. As a follow-up remark related to the issue on anonymity, several interview participants noted that their willingness to provide the Dean feedback was less a function of anonymity concerns or organizational position, but resulted

more from the professionalism and openness of the institution (NPS). These stakeholders acknowledged that under alternate circumstances, such as their holding a different position within the organization or a change in the organization's climate and culture, their concern towards anonymity might differ.

Progressing down the organizational chain-of-command, concerns about anonymity did increase. Wage grade staff members and junior / non-tenured faculty commonly stated that if they were not comfortable with the level of anonymity prescribed, that they would consider the openness of their comments when providing feedback. Tempering interviewee concerns over anonymity were clarifications such as:

- Am I up for promotion?
- What kind of personality does the Dean have?
- What was my relationship with the Dean to begin with?

As with the more senior groups, the junior groups also noted that organizational culture minimized their concerns about anonymity. Interviewees stated that educational institutions such as NPS tend to exhibit heightened degrees of professionalism and maturity. Consequently, process participants would be less likely to demonstrate vengeful or vindictive behavior as compared to other types of organizations.

In summary, concern over anonymity was mixed across the various stakeholder groups. Some groups stated that the nature of their current relationship with the Dean was open and honest such that anonymity would not be an issue. Other groups stated that while anonymity would not necessarily prevent them from providing feedback, it would be an item of interest due to their relative position within the organization. Most participants agreed that, as educators, they welcomed feedback and acknowledging the professional opinions of others was part of the job. Collectively, all stakeholders agreed that the importance of anonymity centered less on maintaining individual secrecy and more around a general desire not to disrupt the relatively cohesive work environment that exists at NPS and within the GSBPP.

3. Procedural Issues

The various procedures involved with implementing a 360-degree feedback system can significantly affect the system's overall success or failure (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1998). For example, if not comfortable with the procedural handling of completed feedback questionnaires, process participants may be greatly concerned about the issue of anonymity. Consequently, in addition to the issue of anonymity, interviewees were also asked about other procedural concerns they might have in conjunction with implementing a multi-rater feedback system for the Dean.

One concern mentioned across multiple stakeholder groups involved the handling of completed questionnaires. Interviewees were advised that under the hypothetical system presented earlier in the interview, completed questionnaires would be placed in a sealed envelope and forwarded to a qualified third party tasked with tabulating the results. Interviewees were then asked if they would be comfortable with the procedures outlined. All interviewees stated that they would be comfortable with the procedures outlined provided they were adhered to and that the third party was independent and trustworthy in nature.

Following the discussion on questionnaire submission procedures, the logical question surfaced as to who would handle the completed questionnaires, i.e. who would be functioning as the third-party tabulator? Aside from an outside agency that would require a monetary outlay, interview participants recommended several individuals according to their positions within NPS. Examples included: one of the GSBPP Associate Deans, a Dean from one of the other schools, a future thesis student, or based on the aspect of tabulating and analyzing the quantitative results, a member of the Operations Analysis Department. Regardless of the third party selected, interviewees agreed the individual would need to be both trustworthy and unbiased in their analysis of the feedback.

Historically, feedback questionnaires have been distributed and collected in their paper form (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997). However, with the widespread utilization of email, more and more 360-degree feedback systems are using

email attachments to replace the use of paper documents. With pros and cons to each format, interviewees were asked about their preference in the handling of questionnaires. Most interviewees stated that they would prefer receiving and submitting their questionnaire in paper format. Reasons for this position included: concerns over electronic security, small scope of system implementation did not warrant time and effort of adapting the questionnaires to electronic format, and it is easier to contemplate questionnaire responses in hardcopy as opposed to looking at a screen.

An important procedural issue mentioned by some mid-level stakeholders at the peer and senior faculty levels, involved a possible shift in the purpose or utilization of the information collected. Damaging to the organization if it should occur, shifting utilization refers to a situation where information is collected under a 360-degree feedback system for the purpose of personal development, and over time this purpose gradually transitions to appraisal or evaluation (Edwards & Ewen, 1996). When feedback information is not used in accordance with the purpose described, distrust and uncertainty develops within the organization. Consequently, interviewees were justified in expressing concern that a 360-degree feedback system implemented for the Dean's personal development is properly managed and not subject to shifting utilization.

The final procedural issue commonly remarked upon by the various stakeholder groups involved what they expected from the Dean following the feedback cycle. Some interviewees stated, that under a 360-degree system, any feedback they provided to the Dean would be for his or her personal use and that as a stakeholder they had no formal expectation to see the results of their input. In essence, what the Dean does with the feedback is his or her business and raters simply have an obligation to provide honest input. A second, less common position amongst the interviewees stated that not seeing results after providing feedback sends a negative message and that it was important for the Dean to acknowledge receiving feedback. Examples of feedback acknowledgment might include: subtle changes in behavior, a message of thanks, or publicizing action

plan objectives. Of course, each of these examples is case specific and, ultimately, it would be the Dean's decision to disclose or work with faculty and staff on the results of his or her feedback report.

When implementing a 360-degree feedback system, mismanaged procedural issues can undermine what would otherwise be a well-designed process. For example, failed procedures for handling completed questionnaires may raise anonymity concerns and diminish the effectiveness of a sound feedback instrument (Wimer & Nowack, 1998). Not acknowledging the procedural concerns of stakeholders often results in low process participation rates and may create feelings of distrust within the organization (Wimer & Nowack, 1998). Soliciting the procedural concerns of the Dean's stakeholders and incorporating these concerns into the process design phase of this thesis will reduce stakeholder anxiety and promote overall system success.

4. Questionnaire Content and Design

Arguably, the most important aspect of implementing a 360-degree system is the content and design of the feedback questionnaire (Edwards & Ewen, 1996). From a rater perspective, the questionnaire must be clear, concise, and the rater must be able to correlate the items listed on the feedback instrument with behavior they have observed in the ratee. From a ratee perspective, questionnaire items must be in accordance with their positional responsibilities, non-ambiguous, and measurable (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997). Given the impact that the content and design of the questionnaire has on the overall feedback process, an important goal of the interviews involved asking each stakeholder group what items were important to their relationship with the Dean and what items they would like to see listed on a feedback instrument. As with other interview topics, results varied according to stakeholder group.

When asked to recommend items for inclusion on a feedback questionnaire, superiors, peers, and senior faculty most commonly targeted strategic / mission-orientated topics. These groups stated that questions would need to measure the Dean's performance in leading not only the GSBPP, but also the Dean's ability to align GSBPP activities with NPS's overall strategic plan.

Specifically mentioned, was the Dean's awareness of balancing four major functional areas within the GSBPP: research, instruction, programs, and work environment. Senior-level faculty stated that amongst these four areas, past Dean's have intermittently allowed imbalances to exist. For example, past Deans may have emphasized faculty instruction over research endeavors.

Consequently, interviewees remarked that providing the Dean feedback related to his or her ability to keep each of these areas in equilibrium should be an important feedback item. Rounding out their remarks, senior-level stakeholders mentioned a series of potential feedback items characteristic of good leadership. Topics included: communication skills, availability, teamwork, and sensitivity to other stakeholder needs and interests.

Working down through the faculty ranks and culminating with GSBPP staff, feedback recommendations tended to shift from broad organizational issues to specific managerial concerns. One item commonly suggested was the Dean's ability to clearly assign and equitably distribute work within the GSBPP. Interviewees stated that workload equity is a sensitive issue amongst the various GSBPP stakeholder groups and that feedback on the topic was warranted. Additionally, as the GSBPP's spokesperson, interviewees stated that it was important to provide the Dean feedback on his or her actions in representing the school's interests. Examples of the Dean's actions in representing the school include: seeking GSBPP financial support from external organizations or working with NPS public works on resolving problems in Ingersoll hall. As a by-product of this issue, communicating the outcome of matters conducted external to the GSBPP was also deemed a significant feedback item.

Representing all levels of the organization, interviewees recommended a wide range of potential topics for inclusion on a feedback questionnaire. By articulating topics on which they would most like to provide the Dean feedback, the interviewees provided significant input towards the feedback instrument presented in Chapter IV.

E. DIALOGUE CONCERNING THE DEAN POSITION

In addition to the literature review, case description, and stakeholder interviews, some information for this thesis was obtained through a series of informal meetings held with the former Dean of the GSBPP, Professor Ken Euske. Professor Euske offered input related to the environment in which the Dean operates, and clarified the various roles and responsibilities of the position. This information was important in that the Dean position is a newly created designation within NPS. Thus, all characteristics and duties of the position have not been clearly defined. As the former Dean, Professor Euske also offered valuable input related to the items listed on the sample feedback questionnaire, which will be presented in Chapter IV of this thesis.

Professor Doug Brook, the current Dean of the GSBPP was not interviewed in preparation of this thesis. New to the job, effective February 2002, it is inappropriate to interview him due to his lack of familiarity with both the position and the organization. Consequently, some material presented in this thesis may be in need of revision under the new Dean. It will be the incumbent Dean's decision to revise the feedback system presented in the following chapter prior to implementation.

F. CONCLUSION

Effective 360-degree feedback systems do not spontaneously happen. A successful process requires thoughtful consideration of the literature and an intricate understanding of the organization in which the 360-degree system will be implemented. The first half of this chapter discussed the organization and environment in which the GSBPP Dean operates. Expanding on this information, interviews were conducted with the Dean's various stakeholder groups. The goal of these interviews was to obtain stakeholder-specific input related to implementing a 360-degree feedback system for the Dean's personal development. Interviewees commented on the issue of anonymity, their procedural concerns, and items related to the content and design of a feedback questionnaire. In association with the literature discussed in Chapter II, the

material presented in this chapter formulates the foundation for designing and implementing a customized feedback system catering to the special roles and functions of the Dean and the GSBPP.

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IV. FEEDBACK IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

A. INTRODUCTION

Since beginning work on this thesis, the overarching goal has been to design a 360-degree feedback plan tailor specifically for the Dean position in the Graduate School of Business and Public Policy. As a foundation for this endeavor, Chapter II introduced several key aspects one should consider when implementing a multi-rater feedback system. Subsequently, Chapter III provided a case description of NPS, the GSBPP, its faculty, staff, and Dean. In addition to the case information, Chapter III also presented the results of interviews that were conducted with several GSBPP stakeholder groups. The purpose of these interviews was to determine the various interests and concerns of stakeholders relevant to implementing a 360-degree feedback system.

Centered on the information presented in Chapters II and III, Chapter IV will address wide-ranging details and issues to consider when implementing a feedback system for the Dean. Topics discussed include: leadership support, training objectives, sample feedback documents, and follow-up activities. It should be noted that while the material presented in this chapter is based on the literature review and case information, the comments and recommendations presented are not concrete in nature. When tasked with the genuine goal of implementing a feedback system, process organizers should take liberty in adapting these recommendations to the situation at hand. Additionally, as evident by the number of books and publications available on the subject, the design and implementation of a 360-degree feedback can be an exceptionally complicated matter. Consequently, the capacity of this thesis limited the detail with which some of the following topics could be discussed.

B. LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

Like any other major organizational change, senior leadership support accelerates the adoption of the 360-degree process (Edwards & Ewen, 1996). With Dean Euske, the outgoing Dean of the GSBPP expressing interest in this

topic, initial leadership support has already been extended. However, organizations considering the adoption of 360-degree systems often find that leadership support may come from all levels of the organization (Wimer & Nowack, 1998). Thus, taking into account the GSBPP's flat organizational design and the Dean's limited power as a catalyst for change, the importance of attaining additional leadership support within the GSBPP should not be understated. Prior to implementing a 360-degree system, it is recommended that leadership support be attained from the Provost, the GSBPP Associate Deans, and a sampling of GSBPP senior faculty and staff. Leadership support is best attained through personal communication whereby the purpose and process of implementing a 360-degree process may be clearly communicated and specific concerns may be addressed. Notably, interviews conducted in the preparation of this thesis may have served as an initial mechanism for gathering the interest and support of senior leadership. Once leadership support is attained, system details must be clearly delineated to all process participants (Edwards & Ewen, 1996).

C. TRAINING

Prior to implementation, system administrators must make a concerted effort to familiarize and train all feedback participants on the 360-degree process. Training may take place during formal group meetings, consisting of a presentation followed by a question and answer session, or through a less formal method such as an office memorandum. The primary training objective should be to ease participant uncertainty by helping them understand the goals of the 360-degree system. It is particularly important to clarify that the system is designed purely for the Dean's personal development and is not tied to his or her formal appraisal and evaluation. Additional training topics should address procedural issues and anonymity concerns.

As mentioned above, one method of providing training is through the use of an office memorandum. Even though this approach lacks the detail and interaction that a formal training session would provide, within the GSBPP,

diverse schedules and multiple feedback groups may necessitate using this method. Considering the memorandum's goal of informing readers of the feedback process and the Dean's intent to implement it for his or her position, the memorandum should be forwarded to two distinct groups. First, the memorandum should be forwarded to all probable raters. This will introduce raters to the feedback process and make them aware that they may receive a questionnaire in the coming weeks. Second, the memorandum should be forwarded to all of the Dean's internal stakeholders. This would include those persons not likely to be selected as a rater, but those who have a viable interest in the Dean's desire to implement the feedback system. Notably, this would include widespread dissemination amongst the GSBPP. Opening organizational communication among the GSBPP faculty and staff about the process is highly advisable

Appendix D of this thesis outlines the contents of a sample training memorandum. Presented as a template, the memorandum is nonspecific, and at the time of implementation it should be adapted to the precise needs of the Dean and the organization. If the memorandum is to be used as the sole method of training participants, care should be taken to address the full range of feedback issues. Generally not as thorough as a formal training session, a well-drafted memorandum can go a long way toward eliminating uncertainty.

Whether conducted formally or through an office memorandum, training is the single most important catalyst for setting the tone of the feedback process (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997). Consequently, regardless of the training technique selected, initial training should devote ample resources to each of the following items (Edwards & Ewen, 1996:

- What is 360-degree feedback and why is the Dean adopting it for his or her personal development?
- Outline the procedural issues of conducting a feedback cycle.
- Provide a timeline for the feedback cycle. When should raters expect to receive a questionnaire and how long do they have to return their completed form?

- What should raters do with their completed questionnaire? Who do they send it to?
- What procedures are in place to ensure rater anonymity and confidentiality?
- Allow ample time / resources for raters and stakeholders to express their concerns or questions regarding the process.
- Who may raters contact with follow-on questions or concerns?

D. FEEDBACK DOCUMENTS

Having attained the support of leadership and conducted training activities, the foundation for an effective feedback cycle will have been established. Consequently, it is appropriate to discuss the content and handling of three documents indispensable to the feedback process: the questionnaire, the feedback report, and the action plan. As seen in Appendices E through G of this thesis, a sample of each of the documents has been created for the proposed feedback system. The following three sections outline the various features of these documents and provide information on incorporating them into the feedback process.

1. Feedback Questionnaire

The feedback questionnaire is notably the cornerstone of the 360-degree process (Tornow & London, 1998). In designing a feedback questionnaire for the Dean, two general resources were utilized. First, observations were made regarding the content and design of commercially available feedback instruments. Second, input provided during the stakeholder interviews was taken into consideration. Anchored in the information gathered from the aforementioned resources, Appendix E contains a proposed feedback instrument targeted to fit the specific needs of the Dean.

There are several notable features to the feedback instrument presented in Appendix E. First, a brief letter of instruction accompanies the questionnaire. Augmenting any previously received feedback training, the letter introduces the rater to the questionnaire, explains how to complete the instrument, provides

instruction for forwarding the completed survey, and provides a point of contact for any questions the rater might have. A second important feature of the feedback instrument is that it initially warns raters not to annotate their name on the questionnaire. This clearly presented statement will serve as a reminder that anonymity is an important part of the process, thereby promoting an environment of open and honest feedback. Third, the instrument asks raters to annotate their stakeholder group within the organization (superior, peer, faculty). Provided each feedback group contains a minimum of three raters, this distinction will not jeopardize rater anonymity and it will provide the Dean an opportunity to compare variances in his or her perceived behavior across stakeholder groups. Fourth, and most importantly, the instrument lists a broad range of questions aligned to the internal norms and job specific competencies of the Dean. Because employees assisted in developing the instrument, it is anticipated that the questionnaire will have high buy-in and content validity (Edwards & Ewen, 1996). Furthermore, the 1 to 5 rating scale affords raters ample distinction when evaluating the Dean's performance while not overwhelming them with a multitude of response choices. In addition to the 1 to 5 scale offered on the questionnaire, a response choice of zero (0) is also provided. Realizing that not all raters will have equal exposure and experience observing the Dean's behaviors, this choice is provided for raters that may not be able to reliably rate the Dean on a specific question.

Augmenting the question and response portion of the feedback instrument, raters are encouraged to provide the Dean written comments in the section provided. Written comments enhance numerical responses and afford raters the opportunity to elaborate on their feedback (Tornow & London, 1998). Expressed as a concern during the stakeholder interviews, written comments should be transcribed verbatim from the questionnaires to the feedback report, except in those cases where rater anonymity may be jeopardized. When a comment is easily traceable to a specific rater, the third-party tabulator of the feedback report should paraphrase or eliminate the comment as needed.

Procedurally, during a genuine feedback cycle, the Dean would disseminate to his or her selected raters a copy of the questionnaire, instructions explaining how to complete the questionnaire, and a sealable envelope such that raters may return their questionnaires without jeopardizing anonymity. The Dean should select an ample number of raters per stakeholder group (superior, peer, subordinate) to ensure ratee anonymity (due to its limited size, anonymity is not always possible with the superior group). In addition to promoting anonymity, selecting a minimum number of raters improves the reliability of the feedback results by broadening the number of questionnaires tabulated. Besides focusing on the number of raters selected, the Dean should utilize the following criteria when choosing raters:

- Raters should have a breadth of experience observing the Dean's behavior.
- Raters should be trustworthy and have solid motives to provide feedback.
- Raters should understand the nature of the Dean's work and the challenges involved.
- Raters should be selected who represent a range of relationships--some of whom the Dean sees as supporters and also some the Dean knows may be more critical.

Upon selecting his or her raters and disseminating the questionnaires, the Dean should also complete a copy of the questionnaire (self-assessment) and submit the completed copy to the third-party tabulator. Collectively, the Dean's self-assessment and all other completed questionnaires will form the feedback report. Once the feedback report is prepared, the third-party tabulator should destroy all completed questionnaires.

2. Feedback Report

Unlike the questionnaire, which is of primary importance to the Dean's raters, the feedback report is of primary importance to the Dean. The report functions as a single reference whereby the Dean may view the perceptions of

his or her stakeholders. The sample feedback report presented in Appendix F is a relatively self-explanatory document that contains graphs and narrative comments designed to provide the Dean a cumulative view of the feedback results. The cover page of the report specifies the purpose of the document and indicates the date and, by stakeholder group, the number of rater responses received during the feedback cycle. Following the cover page are instructions designed to assist the Dean in interpreting the feedback report. The instructions also contain information to help the Dean understand and work through his or her reactions during the review process.

The feedback report is prepared by the third-party tabulator and is the product of all completed questionnaires. Once completed, the third-party tabulator should present the report to the Dean in a one-on-one delivery session. The one-on-one format can be personalized to focus on the Dean's specific needs and provides the confidentiality required when discussing complex and sensitive issues. (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997). In addition to the format selected, the third-party tabulator should consider additional aspects when presenting the feedback results to the Dean. Time of day, location, and the existence of ongoing personal or professional issues can serve to contribute or detract from the feedback session.

However the Dean and the third-party tabulator choose to interact over the feedback report, both parties should remember that the information presented is not simple data, but individual input provided by stakeholders within the organization. By working through the feedback report and the underlying issues behind the various scores, the Dean will be better prepared to translate the feedback received into actions geared towards for his or her personal development.

3. Action Plan

The feedback questionnaire opens organizational lines of communication and affords the Dean's stakeholders a voice. The feedback report provides the Dean with a visual representation of his or her strengths and weaknesses as perceived by the stakeholders. The action plan provides a means of developing

those strengths and weaknesses into a strategy for making personal improvements based on the feedback. An ongoing process that must be continually reinforced and updated, the action plan offers the opportunity for continuous learning and personal development (Edwards & Ewen, 1996).

Once presented with a feedback report, the Dean, in conjunction with a coach or mentor, may translate some of the items listed on the feedback report into action plan objectives. Appendix G of this thesis presents a sample action plan designed for the Dean's use. Simple in format, the action plan represents a logical approach whereby the Dean may translate the feedback report into a catalyst of change for his or her personal development. When selecting objectives for inclusion on the action plan, the Dean may wish to consider the following parameters:

- What is the overall importance of an objective to his or her stakeholders?
- Is there a reasonable expectation the objective may be accomplished?
- Is the objective measurable such that true change can be determined?
- What resources will be involved in achieving the objective?
- What is the appropriate timeline for achieving the objective?
- Is the objective in accordance with the organization's mission and vision?

In addition to the guidance of a coach or mentor, the Dean may utilize other resources in developing and obtaining action plan objectives. Typical methods the Dean may use to obtain his or her action plan objectives include: researching leadership development literature in regard to a specific weakness or strength highlighted in the feedback report, attending a professional seminar, or speaking with stakeholders. The importance of generating an action plan is not based in its format or design, but rather that it is created and the objectives are accomplished. By creating an action plan, the Dean will transform the input of stakeholders into advancing his or her personal development and improving the organization as a whole.

E. THIRD-PARTY TABULATOR

During the course of this thesis, numerous sections have made reference to an individual identified as the third-party tabulator. Presented as a nonspecific term, the third-party tabulator is responsible for collecting the questionnaires, preparing the feedback report, and at the discretion of the Dean, serving as the Dean's mentor or coach in interpreting the feedback results and preparing the action plan. Accordingly, this position is of significant importance to both the Dean and all process participants. As described by the literature in Chapter II, and affirmed by interview remarks in Chapter III, the individual selected as the third-party tabulator must be deemed honorable and trustworthy by all process participants. Consequently, the decision of who to appoint to this position is of significant importance.

Discussed during Chapter III, interviewees offered several suggestions as to which individual within NPS they thought would be best suited to function as the third-party tabulator. Proposals included: one of the GSBPP Associate Deans, a Dean from one of the other schools, a future thesis student, or based on the aspect of tabulating and analyzing the quantitative results, a member of the Operations Analysis Department. Independently, each of these suggestions entails both positive and negative attributes. Consequently, a blend of these recommendations may prove best.

One recommendation involves the use of a future thesis student in combination with one of the Associate Deans. The thesis student would perform the busy-work involved with the feedback process such as questionnaire handling and report preparation. Simultaneously, the Associate Dean, functioning as the student's thesis advisor, would monitor the overall process, and then serve to mentor or coach the Dean on the feedback results. The process would culminate with the student completing work on a thesis that documented the various outcomes of the feedback cycle and offered improvements towards future cycles. Notably, this is but one of many possible options when considering

the appointment of a third-party tabulator. Given the close working relationship the Dean will have with this individual, the ultimate decision of who to appoint should be reserved for the Dean.

F. PROCESS FOLLOW-UP

Once the Dean has analyzed the feedback report and developed an action plan, it may be assumed that the feedback process is complete. However, in order for the Dean and the organization to achieve the long-term benefits of 360-degree feedback, the most critical phase of the process has just begun (Edwards & Ewen, 1996). It is at this point where the design team or process administrator needs to examine the overall process and allow users to provide their input on the effectiveness of the process. Whether the process met its objectives and served the Dean, the stakeholders, and the organization should be determined. This final phase of the implementation process seeks to gain insight from participants and develop recommendations to improve the next round of feedback.

The most common method of gaining information about the feedback process is through a user satisfaction survey (Edwards & Ewen, 1996). Simple in nature, the survey asks participants to provide input on their overall perceptions of the feedback process. Sample topics might include: procedural issues related to the feedback process or items related to the content and design of the feedback questionnaire. Issued by the Dean, the third-party tabulator, or the process administrator, care should be taken to tell all participants that their feedback on the user satisfaction survey is to be strictly limited to their concerns with the feedback process and not involve information related to the Dean. Based on the results of the information collected, system organizers will find that most modifications to the feedback process occur in one or more of the following areas (Edwards & Ewen, 1996):

- Policy decisions, such as who has access to the feedback and how the feedback is handled.

- The feedback instrument itself (e.g., additions, deletions, or modifications of items listed on the questionnaire).
- Process administration (e.g., speed, distribution, simplicity, or handling of questionnaires).

G. CONCLUSION

In today's complex organizations, it would be difficult for any manager to go very long without some form of feedback from the multiple stakeholders of the organization in which they serve. The 360-degree concepts presented in this chapter, were designed with the intent of providing the GSBPP Dean with a method of obtaining input from multiple constituencies within NPS and the GSBPP. Based on the literature review presented in Chapter II and the case information provided in Chapter III, Chapter IV outlined the basic procedures and documents essential to implementing an effective 360-degree feedback system. The recommendations and guidelines presented in this chapter were geared specifically for the Dean position and intended to help process administrators avoid some of the common pitfalls of implementation. Although all of the aspects mentioned in this chapter are important, issues related to the involvement of stakeholders and the protection of rater anonymity must be held in the highest regard. Not doing so, could jeopardize the entire process and reduce the Dean's ability to focus on accurately defined objectives for his or her personal development.

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V. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

A. OVERVIEW

The objective of this thesis was to develop a 360-degree feedback system designed specifically for the GSBPP Dean. Chapter I introduced the reader to the origins of this thesis and discussed the anticipated scope, methodology, and expected benefits of this research. Next, Chapter II set the context for discussing 360-degree feedback by addressing many of the key issues to consider when implementing a multi-rater system. Complementing the generic information presented in Chapter II, Chapter III then discussed case specific information related to NPS, the GSBPP, the Dean, and the Dean's stakeholders. Chapter III also presented comments obtained through interviews conducted with members of the Dean's various stakeholder groups. Combining the information contained in Chapters II and III, Chapter IV outlined procedures and documents for implementing a 360-degree feedback system designed specifically for the Dean's personal development. This final chapter summarizes the contents of this thesis and provides overall conclusions and recommendations.

B. CONCLUSIONS

The GSBPP Dean is a dynamic position tasked with interacting with multiple stakeholders in a diverse DoD environment. In order for the Dean to operate effectively, he or she must receive timely feedback related to performance and stakeholder perceptions. However, the Dean's current systems of feedback rely heavily on either informal communication or a formal appraisal process, neither of which contributes effectively to personal development. Therefore, in association with the Dean's current usage of communication and informal feedback, the conclusion is reached that incorporating a 360-degree feedback system for the Dean would prove beneficial. When implemented properly, 360-degree feedback has a proven track record of promoting personal development and improving organizational communication (Tornow & London,

1998). Collectively, a multi-rater system would provide the Dean the comprehensive performance information required to carry out daily tasks while simultaneously focusing on improved leadership dynamics. The conclusion of this thesis is that NPS, the GSBPP, and its Dean, faculty, and staff would benefit from implementing a multi-rater feedback system designed for the Dean's personal development.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

In accordance with the aforementioned conclusion, it is the overall recommendation of this thesis to introduce a 360-degree feedback system as a personal development tool for the Dean in the GSBPP. The Dean, in conjunction with his or her faculty and staff, should work to appoint a qualified third party to administer the program as outlined in Chapter IV of this thesis. It should be the responsibility of this third party to then formulate the questionnaires, conduct stakeholder training, and administer the program. Subsequent to collecting questionnaires and tabulating results, the third party should present the Dean with a feedback report from which the Dean may embark on the process of personal development.

When interpreting the feedback results, it is highly recommended that the Dean work with a coach or mentor. This individual should be selected by the Dean and may or may not be the same person as the third party who administered and tabulated the questionnaires. The coach will work with the Dean, assisting in the interpretation of the feedback results and culminating the process with the creation of an action plan. Action plan objectives should be measurable, monitored for progress, and altered as the situation dictates.

Subsequent to completing the initial feedback cycle, focus groups should be organized to solicit opinions on the content of the previously used feedback questionnaire and to obtain any input related to procedural items. Group concerns should center purely on improving the feedback process and care should be taken not to mention specific behavioral characteristics of the incumbent Dean or previous feedback provided.

Utilizing input received from the aforementioned focus groups, a final recommendation is for the Dean to repeat the feedback process 8 to 12 months after the initial feedback cycle. Repetitive cycles provide a comparative method of analyzing performance and assuring stakeholders that the 360-degree system is not a management fad, but a legitimate attempt at personal and organizational improvement.

D. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research should be conducted in the following areas:

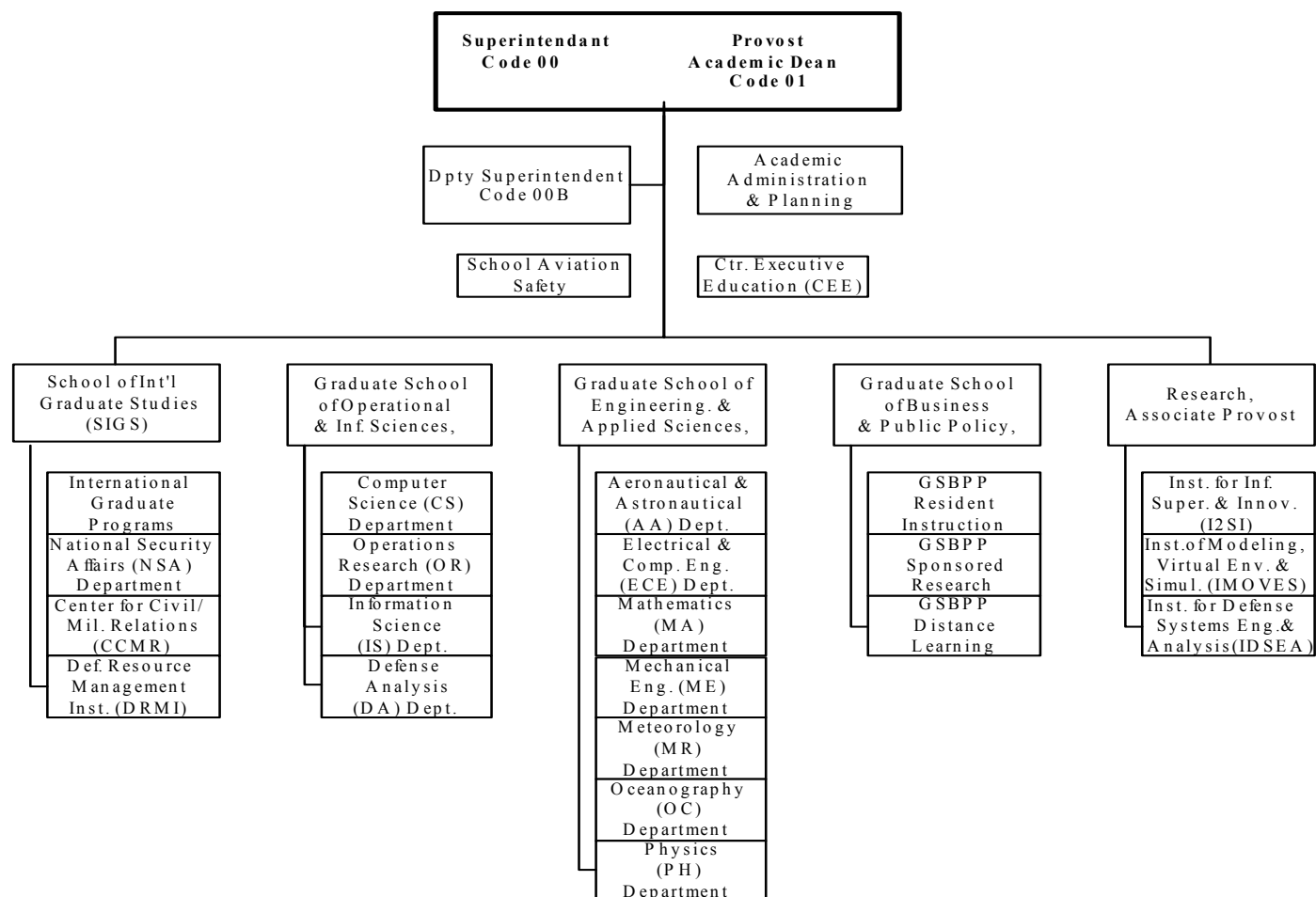
1. The initial limited scope of implementing this system warranted the recommendation of an in-house process facilitator via a paper-based system. However, future research may be conducted to weigh the costs and benefits of hiring an outside firm to administer the program. Once an initial feedback cycle is conducted, the time and effort of internal resources expended may be accurately compared to the cost of hiring an outside agency. In conjunction with this cost /benefit analysis, efforts should be made to evaluate the long-term benefits of 360-degree feedback within the GSBPP.
2. Once multiple feedback cycles have been conducted within the GSBPP, research should be conducted to study the merits of implementing a pilot 360-degree feedback system across a range of NPS administrative staff. Consequently, the benefits of 360-degree feedback might expand beyond the GSBPP via wide-scale implementation across NPS.

E. FINAL THOUGHTS

360-degree feedback has been appreciated by organizations that have adopted it as contributing to effectiveness in several ways. Opening lines of communication, aligning behavioral changes with organizational objectives, and promoting individual performance and development, 360-degree feedback has

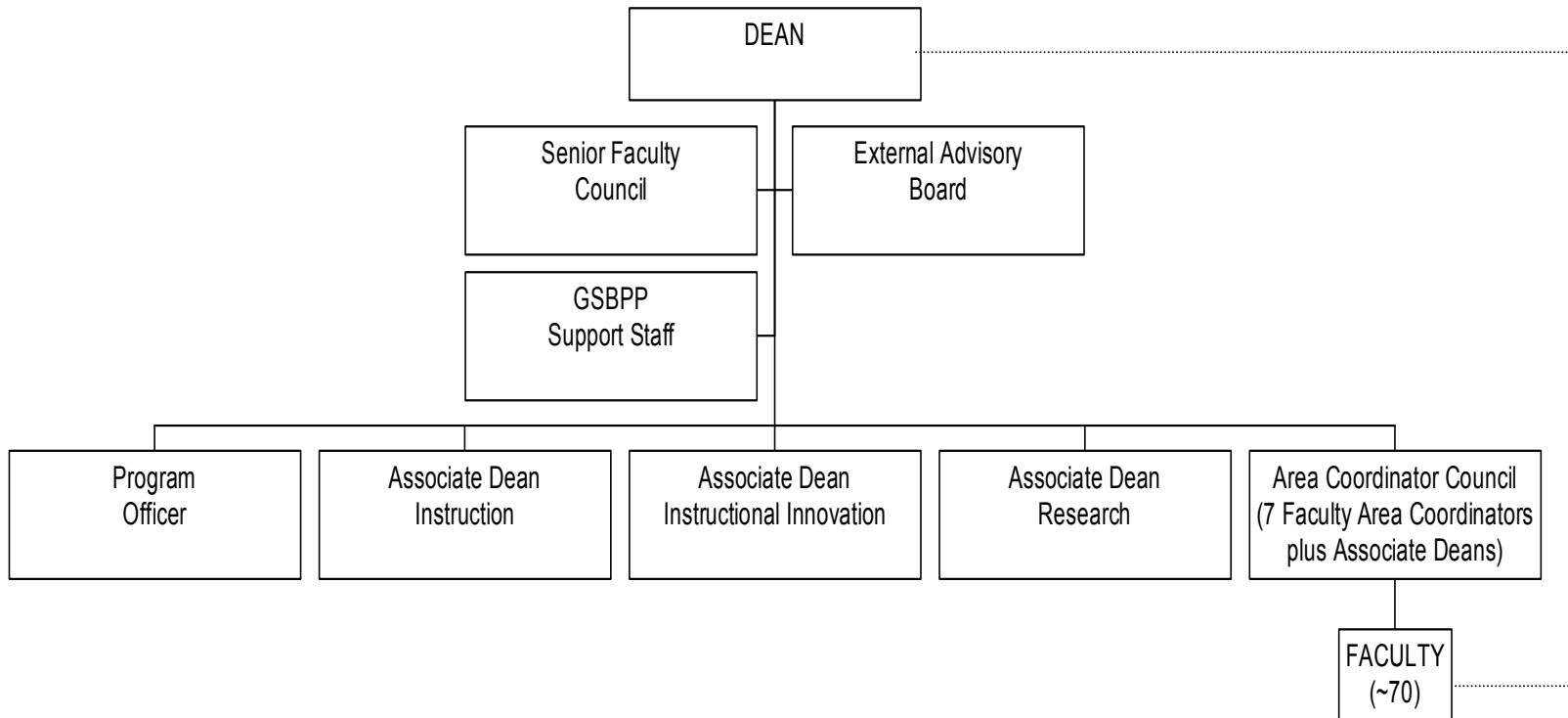
proven itself an extraordinary process. However, translating the promises of multi-source feedback into organizational change can be difficult. To create fair and accurate performance measures that motivate employees and promote development, process organizers must be familiar with both the culture of the implementing organization as well as the literature and theory of 360-degree feedback. This thesis attempted to provide information such that process organizers would have a template for implementing a feedback system for the GSBPP Dean. By balancing their familiarity with the organization against information contained in this thesis and other literature, organizers should be able to implement a system that collectively benefits the Dean, the GSBPP, and NPS.

APPENDIX A: NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL ORGANIZATION CHART



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**APPENDIX B: GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND
PUBLIC POLICY ORGANIZATION CHART**



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APPENDIX C: STAKEHOLDER GROUP, INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

During the course of this thesis, interviews were conducted with several of the Dean's key stakeholder groups. The intent of these interviews was to collect stakeholder perceptions, concerns, and input with regards to implementing a 360-degree feedback system for the Dean's personal development. The format and content of each interview was similar, with slight variations based on the specific characteristics of each stakeholder group. Divided into three segments, interview format and protocols are highlighted below.

Segment I, Introductory Items:

- Participants were thanked for their attendance.
- Introductions were exchanged.
- A brief statement was made on the intent of the research and background of the project.
- Interview participants were asked to speak from their perspective within the organization (e.g., a peer of the Dean, a GSBPP staff member, a non-tenured junior faculty member).
- Interviewees were asked not to offer case specific information about the current Dean.
- Permission was requested to record the interview.

Segment II, Questions and Answers:

- How would you describe your position within the organization and what is your position relative to the Dean?
- Describe your daily interactions with the Dean? Not the individual, but rather the position.
- This series of questions was prefaced by a brief explanation involving a hypothetical feedback system:
 - Based on this hypothetical feedback system, would you be comfortable providing feedback to the Dean?
 - How would your response or willingness to provide feedback be altered if you questioned the process anonymity?
 - In addition to procedural issues, what other items might affect your anonymity concerns?
- In your official capacity as a superior, peer, or subordinate to the Dean, what items, questions, or topics would you like to see listed on a feedback questionnaire?
 - Following an interviewee's initial response, additional issues are probed. Suggesting items the interviewee may not have considered or been able to frame appropriately.

- Relative to the questionnaire we just discussed and the process surrounding it, would you prefer to participate in such a process electronically or via hardcopy?
- Once a feedback cycle is completed, what would be your expectation with regards to seeing the results of you input either formally or informally (provide examples)?

Segment III, Remarks and Concluding Comment:

- Having completed the formal question and answer portion of the interview, do you have any other questions, comments, or concerns with regard to implementing a 360-degree feedback system for the Dean's personal development?
- Thank all participants for attending.

APPENDIX D: TRAINING MEMORANDUM TEMPLATE

MEMORANDUM

[Date]

From: Dean, GSBPP

To: [NPS Staff Member]

Subj: 360-Degree Feedback Implementation Plan

1. Introductory Material
 - Describe 360-degree feedback.
 - Explain why the Dean is implementing it for his or her position.
 - Describe how the process will work (at NPS / within GSBPP)
 - Outline the major procedural issues:
 - anonymity and confidentiality,
 - handling of questionnaires,
 - coaching participants on developing a mindset to provide feedback, and
 - encouraging written comments.
2. Relevance to the Reader
 - Explain how the readers fit into this process.
 - Describe what is expected of them.
 - Specify the timeframe involved.
3. Closing Remarks
 - Tell where the reader can go for more information on the process.
 - Describe whom they should contact with questions or concerns.
 - Express thanks for their active participation

[Signature Block]

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APPENDIX E: SAMPLE FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE

Sample Cover Letter for Accompanying Questionnaire

Dear Faculty Member,

You have been selected to complete a 360-degree feedback questionnaire. Voluntary and anonymous, the attached questionnaire seeks to gain your opinion about the performance of Dean [], GSBPP. It is anticipated that based on your familiarity with the Dean and the job responsibilities, you will be able to provide open and honest communication pertaining to the aspects queried in this survey. Please read the following before completing your questionnaire:

- The Dean will utilize your feedback only for the purpose of personal development and this process is in no way tied to his official appraisal.
- Do not write your name on the questionnaire. This process is intended to be completely anonymous.
- Before completing, please read the introductory material on the top of the questionnaire.
- Answer each item on the questionnaire to the best of your ability.
- When you cannot provide a well-informed response to a specific question, circle option zero (0) for that item.
- In the space provided at the end of the questionnaire, handwritten comments are encouraged.
- Once completed, place and seal your questionnaire in the envelope provided.
- Via guard mail or hand delivery, please return your questionnaire to [third-party tabulator].

Please complete your questionnaire no later than []. Questions or concerns regarding this process may be directed to [the process administrator] at extension [xxxx]. Thank you for your participation.

DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME ON THIS FORM

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND PUBLIC POLICY
360-DEGREE FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE**

Evaluation of: Dean, GSBPP

Date:

Please circle the category that best describes your relationship with the Dean or within the GSBPP:

Superior Peer Tenure-Track Faculty (Tenured)
Tenure-Track Faculty (Non-tenured) Lecturer / Senior Lecturer
Staff Other: _____

For each of the following questions, and in accordance with the rating scale provided, please circle the number that best reflects your assessment of the Dean's performance.

Rating Scale

5 = Always; 4 = To a great extent; 3 = To some extent; 2 = Rarely; 1 = Never;
0 = Do not know, No strong opinion

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Actions are consistent with words. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Demonstrates high standards of honesty and integrity. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Accomplishes established goals and objectives. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Effectively manages GSBPP human resources | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Provides timely responses. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Facilitates understanding and cooperation among all members of the GSBPP. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Communicates effectively orally | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Breaks down barriers to achieve goals. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Provides opportunities for ongoing professional development. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Encourages innovative and creative thinking. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Effectively manages GSBPP financial resources | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Facilitates an environment of high expectations. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Considers global consequences in decision making and actions. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Communicates service to students as primary goal. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Displays enthusiasm and dedication for carrying out the Dean position. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Seeks out different perspectives in resolving problems and issues. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Shares information, knowledge, and expertise with others. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Communicates vision clearly. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Communicates openly and honestly within GSBPP. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

| | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Coordinates effective communication between NPS and the GSBPP. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Listens effectively and seeks to understand. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Effectively manages GSBPP physical resources | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Communicates effectively in writing | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| On the whole, maintains a balance among the various GSBPP activities (research, instruction, programs, work environment). | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

In the space provided below, and on the reverse of this form as needed, please provide written comments to clarify or elaborate on your above responses. In addition, comments may also be provided on feedback items unrelated to the questions listed above. Comments will be paraphrased to ensure your anonymity.

Thank You For Your Participation

APPENDIX F: SAMPLE FEEDBACK REPORT

Confidential Feedback Report

Prepared for

**John Doe,
GSBPP Dean**

Questionnaires Issued: 18 March 2002

Questionnaires Compiled: 02 April 2002

Number of Responses: 25

Supervisor(s): 2 Peer(s): 3 GSBPP Faculty: 15

GSBPP Staff: 4 Self: 1

Understanding Your Feedback Report

This document is a confidential report prepared for you that contains a summary of the 360-degree feedback provided by your raters. Please consult the following information to help you interpret and understand your feedback results.

What This Report Contains

This report provides information in the form of charts and written comments and is organized according to the items listed on the feedback questionnaire. Quantitative data are presented graphically allowing for easy comparison across feedback groups, whereas written comments serve to clarify numeric responses and are presented at the end of this report. There are several ways in which data in this report can be used. For example, you can see how your self-ratings compared with those of others and analyze how you are viewed across the various categories of raters.

What This Report Does Not Contain

To protect the anonymity of your raters, and encourage them to be frank and honest in their feedback, this report does not contain any information regarding specific rater responses or comments.

Personal Planning

Once you review this report, the next step is to undertake your own personal development planning process. You may wish to seek the guidance of a coach or trusted mentor in designing your personal development action plan. Suggested process guidelines include:

- Determine your personal goals based on what you have learned from this report. Goals should be orientated towards positive behaviors.
- Describe each goal in specific terms. For example, “Improved communication skills” is vague. A better goal would be, “Improve communication to Senior Lecturer faculty regarding upcoming adjustments to MBA program.”
- Identify steps that will help you work toward your goals. For example, reading a certain book, attending a class, practicing a new behavior, or designating one hour per week to a particular task.

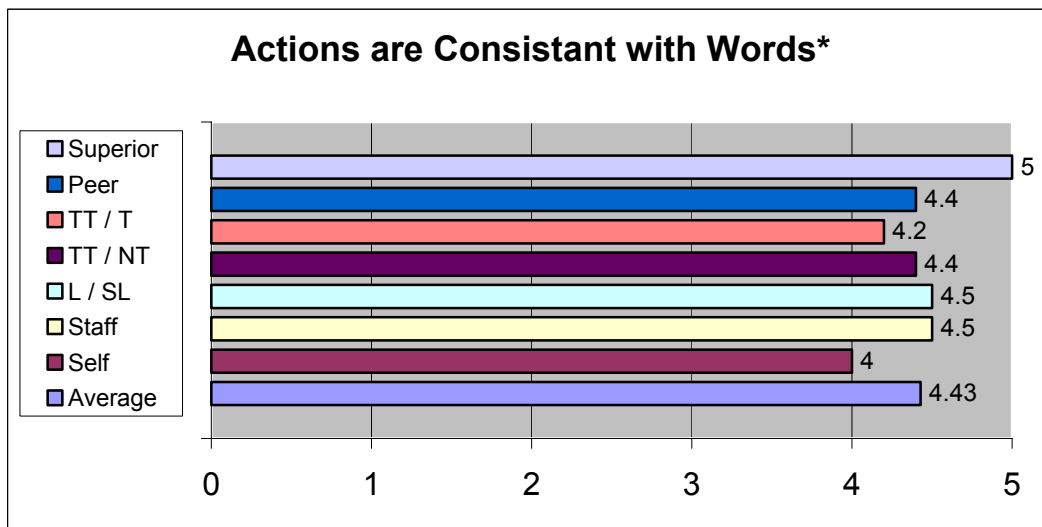
- Identify signs or indicators that will tell you that you are progressing towards your goal. For example, senior lecturer participation has increased 25 percent or research funding has increased 10 percent. Assessable goals help to measure change and reinforce positive behaviors.
- Repeat the 360-degree process in 8 to 12 months. This delay will afford your raters the opportunity to view positive changes in your behavior and your new feedback results will serve as a mechanism for comparison.

Feedback Graphs

This section of the feedback report contains graphical displays of each item listed on the feedback questionnaire. Above each graph you will find a question or statement from the feedback questionnaire. To the left of each graph is a breakdown of the various rater groups (superior, peer, etc.). Each bar within the graph indicates the average score received from the corresponding rater group listed to its left. The final bar in each graph is a comprehensive average of all the groups including your self-assessment. Responders provided ratings based on the following scale:

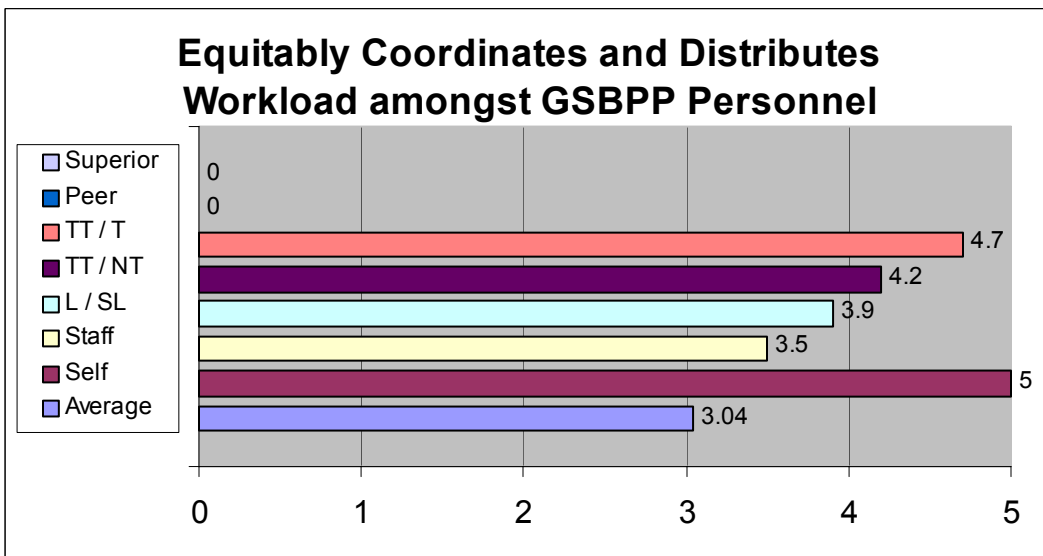
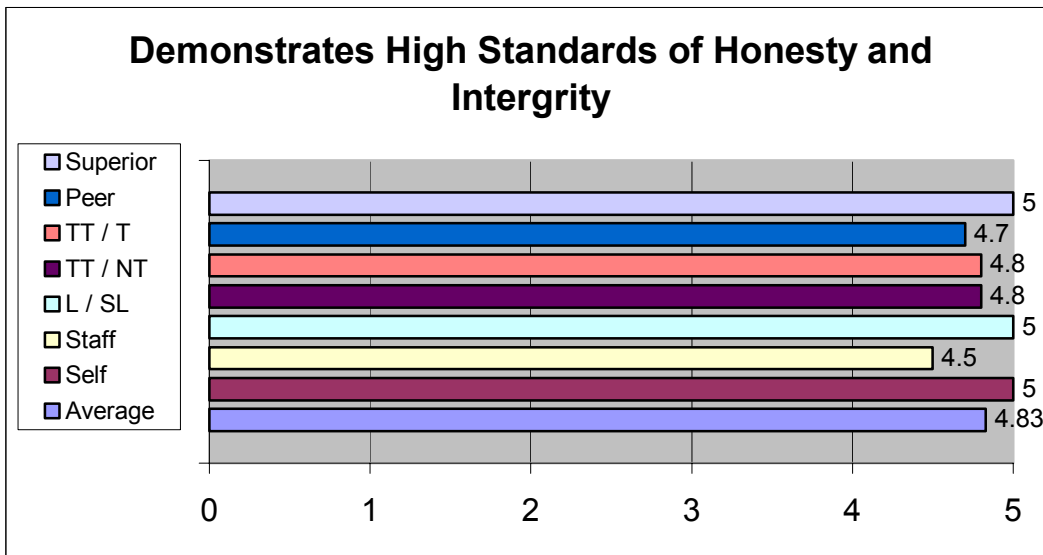
5 = Always; 4 = To a great extent; 3 = To some extent; 2 = Rarely;
1 = Never; 0 = Do Not Know, No Strong Opinion*

*Raters providing a score of 0 (zero) for a specific question were not figured into a question's overall average.



**TT / T – Tenure-Track, Tenured TT / NT – Tenure-Track, Non-tenured
L / SL – Lecture / Senior Lecturer

* All chart data and written comments are fictional for illustrative purposes only.



The above graphs represent only a portion of the items listed on the questionnaire in Appendix E. In an actual feedback report, all questionnaire items would be graphed.

Written Comments

This section of the feedback report contains written comments provided by process participants from the various stakeholder groups. Rater comments often prove useful in that they provide information that cannot be communicated adequately by numbers or graphs. All comments listed below are verbatim, except in cases where explicit remarks may have jeopardized a rater's anonymity. In such instances, comments are paraphrased to maintain rater anonymity.

Comments from Supervisors:

"Is constantly on the lookout for areas of improvement."

"More attention is needed in communicating resource requirements."

"I am impressed with his ability to shape DoD focus of curricula."

Comments from Peers:

"Has done a great job eliminating procedural restrictions for research funding."

"He's often brilliant, yet I am unsure if he fully considers outside recommendations."

Comments from Tenure-Track, Tenured Faculty:

As provided

Comments from Tenure-Track, Non-tenured Faculty:

As provided

Comments from Lecturer / Senior Lecturer Faculty:

As provided

Comments from Staff:

As provided

APPENDIX G: SAMPLE ACTION PLAN

Personal Action Plan Dean, GSBPP

| Personal Action Plan – Objective 1 | |
|--|---|
| OBJECTIVE What is the targeted objective? What specifically do I want to accomplish? | Improve NPS – GSBPP communication on matters affecting GSBPP staff. |
| STRATEGY / RESOURCES How am I going to achieve the objective and what resources will I need? | Heightened attentiveness to staff-related matters. Propose idea of meeting with staff on a bi-monthly basis. Resources: none. |
| TARGET DATE When will I achieve the objective? | Implementation within 30 days. Observable on an ongoing basis. |
| OBSERVABLE / MEASUREABLE RESULTS How will I know I have achieved the objective? | Staff outlook and posture. Positive attitudes and feedback. The results of future feedback reports. |

| Personal Action Plan – Objective 2 | |
|--|---|
| OBJECTIVE What is the targeted objective? What specifically do I want to accomplish? | Improve management of GSBPP financial resources. |
| STRATEGY / RESOURCES How am I going to achieve the objective and what resources will I need? | Ensure all expenditures are directly or indirectly linked to GSBPP mission. Promote fiscal responsibility among faculty and staff. Review accountability and reporting procedures |
| TARGET DATE When will I achieve the objective? | Implementation within 30 days. Observable on an ongoing basis. |
| OBSERVABLE / MEASUREABLE RESULTS How will I know I have achieved the objective? | Fiscal year / quarter comparisons. Overall GSBPP financial viability. Staff feedback. NPS support. Comptroller feedback. |

This action plan is an abbreviated example. A genuine action plan should be designed to fit the specific needs of the Dean with the situation dictating the type and number of objectives listed.

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